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# The Canadian Society for Coptic Studies

## La société canadienne pour les études coptes

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# Editor's Note

The 15th Annual Coptic Studies Symposium, which was again held virtually in November 19, 2022, centered on the theme of “Material Worlds: Documenting Coptic Experience.”

This Symposium examines how documenting material culture helps convey Coptic experiences across time and social contexts. It features six papers that use interdisciplinary approaches to explore how both ancient and modern methods of documentation deepen our understanding of Coptic identity and cultural engagement in Egypt and beyond.

Museum displays serve as a primary means for the public to connect with ancient lives, offering insights into different historical periods and regions. In her article “(Re)constructing Coptic Lives in Late Antiquity” Jennifer Cromwell uses the concepts of “object biography” and “object itinerary” to explore the history of three Egyptian objects from seventh-century Western Thebes, now displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. While these artifacts are presented alongside items from the broader Mediterranean, the analysis reveals both the lives of Coptic Egyptians and the influence of modern collecting practices. This approach highlights how meanings of artifacts evolve as they change contexts over time.

Azza Adel provides an overview of various theories on bilingualism and diglossia. The study examines linguistic history across different eras, with particular emphasis on Ancient Egypt. Special attention is given to the Roman and Byzantine periods, highlighting Coptic documents that feature multiple languages.

Youhanna Nessim Youssef examines two central aspects of the commemoration of Saints Apollo and Epip: its spatial and temporal dimensions. Originating in Middle Egypt at the Monastery of Bawit, their veneration later spread to Lower Egypt, particularly in the monastic region of Scetis. Beginning in the sixth century and lasting over a thousand years, this devotion is traced through an analysis of liturgical texts, icons, and wall paintings.

Emile Tadros investigates how Coptic liturgical traditions reflect and preserve elements of the Jewish Oral Torah. Both traditions emphasize the oral transmission of sacred teachings as a means of continuity and preservation. Through this shared emphasis, notable parallels between Coptic Christianity and Halakhic Judaism emerge.

Iconographers create sacred images rooted in biblical themes and Church doctrine, with Coptic icons meant to convey spiritual narratives. Recognizing that art is shaped by its cultural and historical context, the Coptic Museum of Canada seeks to document contemporary iconographers. In her article Helene Moussa, explores how Victor Fakhoury’s icon series on the 2011 Egyptian Uprising is interpreted through his artistic lens.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

And finally, Fatin Guirguis explores how oral tradition enables the Copts to preserve their history and identity while resisting external control. By relying on oral transmission, even as descendants of a highly literate culture, they safeguard collective memory and avoid written evidence vulnerable to distortion. Analyzing *The Vision of Theophilus*, she demonstrates how formulaic language functions as a coded, protective mode of historical narration.

RAMEZ BOUTROS  
Editor in General of *JCS*