

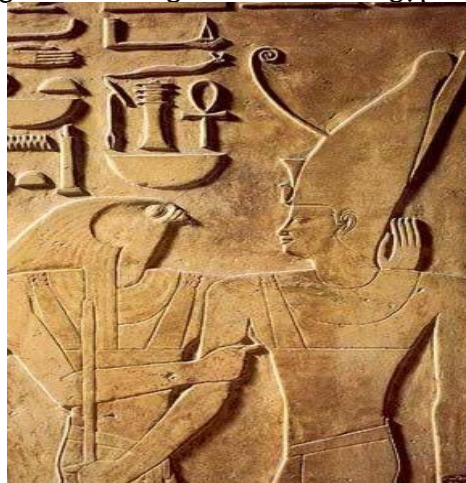
Information on the Use and Meaning of Symbols in Egyptian Religion

Ancient Egyptian Symbolism

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SYMBOLISM, AN INTRODUCTION
BY JOHN WATSON



When attempting to understand the ancient Egyptians and their culture, some understanding of symbolism and how it affected the ancient Egyptians is essential. One may only gawk at these great monuments without understand otherwise. In fact, as we stand before the Great Pyramids of Giza, we are seeing layer upon layer of symbolism. They are, to us, symbolic of man's ancient triumphs, but to the ancient Egyptians, they symbolized the very fabric of creation; the primordial mound from which life arose. All about us, as we visit the famous temples and tombs, are symbols that had great meaning to the ancient Egyptians.



Symbols represent something other than what they actually are. Generally, they are based on conventionally agreed upon meanings, but unlike signs, which usually stand for something very concrete (as in the case of mathematical signs), symbols usually stand for something less visible or tangible than the symbol itself. As an example, we have many symbols today, such as the cross for Christianity, the half moon for Islam.

Symbols must frequently be differentiated from what Egyptologists call "attributes," which generally represent something by the display of one of its parts (as in the use of the crown for the king or the crook and flail of Osiris, and from emblems, which are distinctive badges that represent an individual, group, office or nation (as in the use of the serekh, representing the palace facade, to display the Egyptian king's name). Of course, attributes and emblems often exhibit some of the characteristics of symbols, and in a different context, what might be considered an attribute, such as the king's crown, could also be symbolic. For example, there were crowns of upper and lower Egypt, which respectively did symbolize those regions.

Symbolic Expression in Egyptian Culture



The civilization of ancient Egypt was symbolically oriented to a degree rarely equaled by other cultures. It was through symbols that the Egyptians represented and affirmed many of their ideas, beliefs and attitudes regarding the nature of life, death, the supernatural and reality. Symbols often depict aspects of reality or ideas that are difficult to represent through other modes of expression, and the ancient Egyptians used them constantly in this manner.

Symbolism, in fact, has been described as a primary form of ancient Egyptian thought, and it is necessary to understand the pervasive nature of this way of thinking in order to fully grasp the role of symbols in Egyptian society. Artists, architects and craftspeople utilized symbols in the

design and construction of objects ranging from temples, tombs and other monuments to the smallest items of everyday life. Yet this constant incorporation of symbols was not merely a matter of decoration or playful visual punning. The use of symbolism allowed the ancient Egyptians to impose their view of life on the surface of perceived reality by incorporating or imagining symbols in the objects, forms and activities that surrounded them.

For example, a common depiction, from the beginning of the ancient Egyptian civilization until the end of the pharaonic period, was the vision of a king, arm raised in the act of smiting the enemies of Egypt with a mace, was symbolic of the king's role of protecting Egypt from chaos. However, many ancient kings who were so portrayed probably never went to battle. These depictions therefore symbolize more of a perceived reality than reality itself.



This is not to say that symbols were employed only in the representational forms of art and architecture, for symbolism was manifested in many other areas of life, such as the practice of formal and informal magic, or religious ritual. Egyptian religion and magic both relied to a great extent on symbolism to accomplish their ends. As a result, the symbolism inherent in a given work is often an expression of underlying religious or magical beliefs that give the work life, meaning and power.



Because symbols are different from the things they represent, some kind of association must always be present to link the symbol to its referent, the aspect of reality or the idea that it represents. In Egyptian symbolism these associations are usually visual. In fact, the Egyptian language appears to have had no single word that exactly parallels our term "symbol". The closest and most common approximation is probably "twf", which means "image". Obviously, this underscores symbolism's largely visual basis. But symbols are not limited to the visual. Sounds and perhaps even scents and other sensory perceptions (such as incense) could hold symbolic content for the Egyptians. But it is largely the expression of visual symbolism that has survived, and this provides the bulk of the evidence considered here.

In any type of symbolism, symbol and reality (and ideas) were inextricably intertwined in ancient Egypt. Therefore, a person's name, both written and spoken, not only identified and represented that person as an individual but was also a veritable part of the individual's being, to the extent that to deface or destroy the name, and thus prevent its being spoken or seen, helped to destroy the existence of the person named. Once established, the symbolic aspect of an object became a part of its identity which was rarely ignored entirely, and frequently expressed to the full. Because light-reflecting mirrors shone like the sun, for example, to the ancient Egyptians it was perhaps preferable that mirrors be circular, and that any decoration applied to them related in some way to solar symbolism.



Not only were symbol and reality inextricably intertwined in Egyptian thought, symbols were also used to adjust perceived reality and to impose on it a meaningful and acceptable framework. This is seen especially in the fact that the Egyptian use of symbols represents a system in which the existence of conflicting facts was often successfully resolved by means of the ambivalent nature of the symbols themselves. Symbols frequently have several meanings and may openly contradict themselves in their expression, yet, in symbolic thought, the two opposing expressions may be viewed as complementary rather than contradictory.

For example, an animal such as the crocodile, for example could symbolize not only death and destruction but also solar oriented life and regeneration, because both appear to be true aspects of the creature's observed and mythical nature. Despite its fearsome and destructive aspect, the crocodile faces the morning sun as though in adoration, and it also hunts fish, the mythological enemies of the sun god. A similar polarity is seen in the Egyptian perception of many aspects of the natural world and in the character of many Egyptian gods. Osiris, for example, may be said

to symbolize both death and regenerated life. Either meaning, or both, may be implicit to the use of a given symbol, depending on context.

The manipulation of contradictory facts through the use of symbols was not always complete, however, and in some cases symbols compete or consciously stress contradictions in the same setting. For example, the king wished to be seen as all powerful and in relationship to the common people he was indeed an individual of great power. Yet, the king is at the same time seen as dependent on the gods, receiving their protection. Both of these factors received independent symbolic representation, though usually in different contexts.

To a certain extent, the function of symbols in Egyptian art, life and thought was also contradictory. The symbols may be esoteric or exoteric. They may be utilized both to reveal and to conceal. They reveal by evoking important aspects of reality, while they conceal through limiting the audience that understands their message. Both aspects are integral parts of Egyptian symbolic expression and were employed according to context and need.

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN SYMBOLISM, THE FORMS AND FUNCTIONS BY JOHN WATSON



In Egyptian culture the more important and frequently encountered aspects of visual symbolism are form, hieroglyphs, relative size, location, material, color number, action and gesture. However, symbolism in ancient Egypt is a very complex topic that, from one Egyptologist to the next, can have different connotations. Certainly, we have some obvious examples of symbolism, but as we delve deeper into the intricacies of symbolism, there is less clarity. On the other hand, any investigation of this topic is an expedition into the ancient Egyptian mind, and the study of symbolism adds much to our understanding of ancient Egypt.

Form Egyptian art utilizes form symbolism at two levels, which may be said to be primary and secondary, or direct and indirect types of association. At the first level, objects are shown in the forms they are meant to represent and gain symbolic significance through association and context. An example of this is the djed pillar as a symbol of support.



At the secondary level, symbolic associations occurs when significant forms are represented indirectly, as in the case of the clenched-hand amulets which represent sexual union. In many cases, images that are widely disparate in form may actually relate to the same underlying symbolic theme. Conversely, even small modifications of form may result in significant changes in the symbolic meaning. The former can be seen in the wide array of symbols associated with the goddess Hathor, ranging from the papyrus plant to the cow. A good example of the latter is frequently seen in representations of the human figure, where different poses such as kneeling, seated, standing or striding may imply very different meanings. In formal architectural decoration, programmatic modification of the form such as in the location and color of solar disks in tombs, or the transition from plant bud to fully open capital forms of columns in temples, is frequently employed to symbolize spatial and temporal aspects of the cosmos.

Hieroglyphs

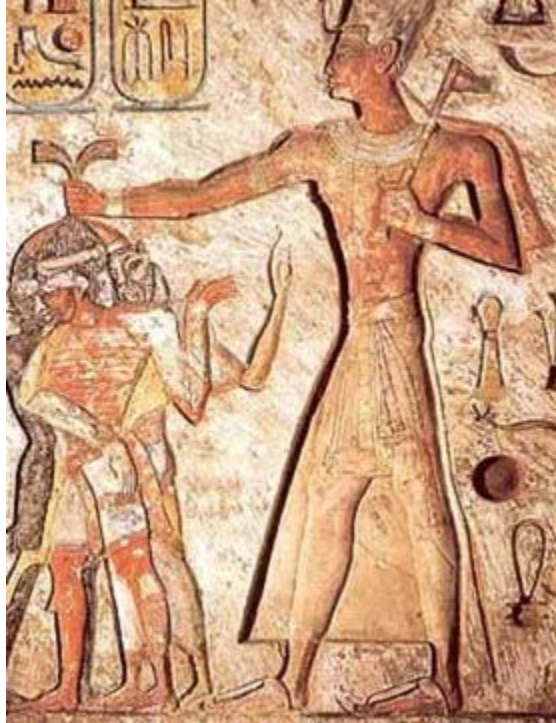


A specialized subset of form symbolism, hieroglyphic symbolism is one of the most frequent sources of symbols encountered in Egyptian art and may be expressed in several ways. In ideographic representation (the depiction of a figure or object in the form of a hieroglyphic sign) hieroglyphic forms may function as representations of individuals and as manifestations of the gods themselves. Rebus representation (the spelling out of personal names or titles by combining hieroglyphic signs with syllabic values in the composition) was also commonly employed for two and three dimensional representations of kings, and frequently others. While visual metaphor (the use of a sign to suggest something else with which it is somehow associated) is relatively infrequent, visual analogy (the use of hieroglyphic signs for things that they resemble) is especially common in Egyptian art.



In the latter type of representation, objects are made in the form of hieroglyphic signs they resemble. For example, a mirror case or a vase in the shape of an ankh sign, or a headrest in the form of the horizon hieroglyph. This type of mimicking of forms is usually tied in some way to the meaning or significance of the object. The forms of hieroglyphs were also "projected" by the Egyptians onto actual objects in two ways. On the one hand, hieroglyphic forms were used in the design and production of various objects. On the other hand, natural objects were viewed and represented in the form of hieroglyphic signs which they resembled. Only the educated elite of Egyptian society could properly write and read, and it was for them that most artworks were produced. Nevertheless, it is thought that many people probably recognized at least some of the more common hieroglyphs and could understand common examples of hieroglyphic symbolism.

Size



The stratified sizes of god and human, king and subject, tomb owner and servant, parent and child or husband and wife are usually symbolic of relative status and power within Egyptian compositions. This is particularly clear in scenes recorded on temple walls and in other settings which show the Egyptian king at a much larger scale than his enemies, heightening the hierarchical effect of the representation by emphasizing the helplessness of the enemy and the king's superhuman stature. In two and three dimensional colossal representations of kings and gods, the stratification is actually based on the relative scale of the colossus and the viewer. In a similar manner, even fully adult children are frequently depicted standing beside their parents as tiny figures, even though their figures, hair and clothing leave no doubt as to their actual maturity. While Egyptian artists also used reduction of scale for purely artistic, compositional reasons, such instances are usually clearly discernible from symbolic ones.



The principle of sizing figures equally, in order to suggest equality or near-equality of status, may be achieved through both isocephaly and equality of scale. Isocephaly may indicate equality between subjects by placing heads of figures at the same level, or it may maintain a

hierarchical difference by ensuring that an individual of lesser importance does not look down on a more important figure. Although isocephaly typically results from the use of the same drafting grid for both figures in Egyptian representations, many examples exist that indicate conscious same-sizing. Equality of scale does not always in every case imply equality of status (though this is unusual). For example, in New Kingdom battle scenes a single enemy figure may be depicted at the same scale as the Egyptian king in order to represent the enemy as a whole.



The adjusted size of individual body parts or areas for symbolic reasons must also be considered under this heading. Bodily proportions may be adjusted or emphasized as a means of suggesting maturity or status, as in the purposefully corpulent rendering of temple statues and tomb representations of private officials, and in some cases in royal representations. Many so-called fertility figurines clearly exaggerate male or female sexual characteristics for symbolic and magical purposes. Relative sizing can tell us much about various and specific individuals in ancient Egypt. It tells us, for example, how a king viewed his own status in relationship to gods, or how he viewed the status of women.

Location

One aspect of ancient Egypt that is not understood by many is that location, and for that matter orientation, could be absolute or relative, referring on the one hand to the specific location of a representation, object, building or place (such as a sacred site), and on the other to the positioning or alignment of something in relation to some other representation, object, building or place. From very early times, funerary scenes depicting pilgrimages to sacred sites are clear indicators of the importance of locational aspects in ancient Egyptian religion. Even when the sites were not actually visited, they maintained a symbolic role that involved the spiritual continuity of the veneration of the sacred place. While location symbolism thus frequently applies to actual specific sites, absolute locational symbols are often paired or juxtaposed as representative of a more abstract geographic or cosmic dichotomy (separation into two parts), such as Upper and Lower Egypt, east and west or heaven and earth. This type of oppositional or symmetrical pairing is often expressed, in turn, through relative locational symbolism, which may range from careful arrangement and alignment of elements within

individual compositions or funerary (tomb goods) and religious (temple furniture) assemblages, to the architectural and decorative programs of whole buildings such as temples and tombs, and even the planning of groups of buildings and cities. Sometimes the orientation is according to a simple right/left, east/west, or north/south dichotomy. In other cases, it reflects subtler divisions within the structure of the individual composition or building.



For example, frequently in Temples, columns with capitals representing Upper Egypt (southern Egypt) were arranged in the southern part of the temple, while those with capitals representing Lower or northern Egypt were arranged in the northern part. Small-scale manifestations of this kind of relative placement may be seen, for example, in the "prepositional" placement of representations of kings before the figures of protective deities such as the overshadowing Horus falcon, the Hathor cow and the sphinx in its various forms. This orientation implies the idea of protection for the king and is reflected in the hieroglyphic formula "protection behind him," commonly written behind the king. Similarly, to be "beneath" another figure might connote inferiority or subjugation, as many be seen in the carefully controlled relative placement of figures in scenes of victory over fallen enemies, and in the depiction of captives on the bases of royal thrones and footstools.

Material



Various materials held very symbolic significance for the ancient Egyptians, and not least of these were the precious metals. Gold was regarded as divine on account of its color and brightness (symbolic of the sun (and its untarnished nature (symbolic of eternal life)). In fact, the flesh of the gods descended from the sun god Re was said to be made of gold, and therefore many images of deities were formed either completely from this precious metal, or gilded to look as though made of gold. Silver also had divine associations. The bones of the gods were said to be made of silver, and it was used extensively as a symbol of the moon in mirrors and in figures of lunar gods such as Khonsu and Thoth. Many other more common materials were also

symbolically important. Among stones, for example, the black coloration of basalt gave it a natural association with the underworld, while lapis lazuli was symbolic of the heavens because of its blue ground color and star-like golden specks. Similarly, materials as diverse as wood, wax and water could suggest one or more symbolic associations. Water, for example, functioned as a symbol of purification and acceptance,



as well as life, renewal and fertility. The symbolic importance of a substance was often based on its natural color, but a substance might also be important because of some unusual characteristic or through mythological associations.

Color

Color was one of the most important aspects of Egyptian symbolism and is the underlying reason for the symbolic association of many materials. Individual colors could suggest different things according to context and use. Red, the color of fire, the sun and blood, could symbolize any of these things, or more abstract concepts of life and destruction associated with them. Blue was naturally associated with the heavens and water, and in the latter association could represent the concept of fertility. Yellow, a primary solar color, was used extensively for solar related objects such as the scarab and the golden bodies of the gods. Black, though a color associated with the netherworld and its specific deities, could also be used in non-funerary contexts and was symbolic of fertility through its association with the rich black earth of the Nile Valley. Green was the color of luxuriant vegetation and therefore of life itself. It could also signify health and vitality, and the sound or undamaged eye of Horus is often depicted in this color.



White was sometimes used as a symbol of purity, but as a solar color, white could also be used as an alternative to yellow in some contexts. The interchange of colors that existed in Egyptian art is partly a result of the somewhat different classification of colors used by the Egyptians, and partly of the principle of equivalence. Hence, different colors could be used for the same purpose, such as white, yellow and red for the appearance of the sun. Colors could also be interchanged because of abstract, symbolic connections

between them, such as black and green as colors of regeneration.

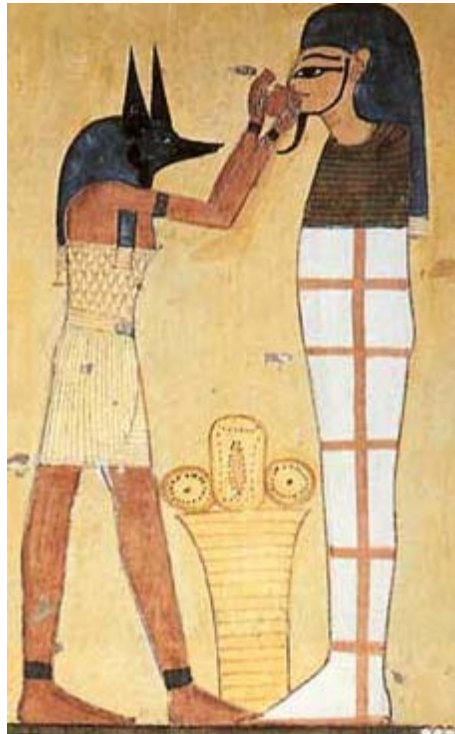
Number



Several numbers held symbolic significance for the Egyptians, particularly the integers 2, 3, 5, 7 and their multiples, all of which are usually, in some way, expressions of unity in plurality. It is thus unity rather than diversity that is stressed in many of the dualities seen in Egyptian art. The phenomenon of duality pervades Egyptian culture and is at the heart of the Egyptian concept of the universe, which views the many evident dichotomies of light and dark, sun and moon, east and west, stability and chaos and so on, as expressions of the essential unity of existence. Similarly, while three was the number associated with the concept of plurality, three was also a number of unity inherent in plurality, as may be seen in the many divine families which Egyptian theology constructed of a god, his wife and their child, or in the characterization of Amun, Re and Ptah as the soul, face and body of the god. Of course, a classic example of god, wife and child was Osiris, Isis and Horus. To a great extent although they may often connote simple plurality, symbolic use of the numbers four, six, seven, nine and twelve also follows this pattern of unity in plurality. Larger numbers, such as one thousand (as in the offering formula "a thousand loaves of bread") and greater, usually symbolize plurality alone.

Actions

Actions depicted in Egyptian art may be performed by gods, humans or animals. They may be real, mythical or iconographic and may also be classed as ritual or non-ritual. Any of these types of action may have symbolic significance.



Real actions are simply actions that take place in the real world. Many representations of the Egyptian king engaged in some kind of ritual activity depict real events in which the king actually participated. By contrast, images showing the king involved in mythically related activities may represent something that was acted out (as in certain temple rituals where costumed priests may have represented various deities), but these actions also appear to have been depicted largely for symbolic purposes. The theme of ritually slaying enemies may well have been a real action at times, but it is frequently depicted in an exaggerated or unrealistic manner for symbolic or propagandistic purposes. Here, they are described as iconographic actions. The majority of formal actions depicted in Egyptian art are of a ritual nature. Most aspects of the activity such as time, place and manner, were fully prescribed and conducted according to an established formula or protocol. Each detail of such ritual actions may have specific symbolic significance. Non-ritual actions, however, are the actions of everyday life,

though these may sometimes have symbolic significance. Therefore, representations of pouring and throwing in some contexts may relate covertly to physical sexuality and hence to birth and the rebirth of the afterlife.

Gesture

One particular aspect of symbolism of actions is gesture symbolism, or using the positioning or movement of the body, head, arms or hands. Of all the visual symbolisms, this is the most difficult as well as the most complex for us today to understand, usually because Egyptian artists worked within established formulae for the depiction of the human body. Thus, these conventional depictions serves both to obscure certain types of gestures and to summarize others, with gestures usually being "frozen" in the representations at a single characteristic point. Many, if not most, gestures depicted in Egyptian art functioned as nonverbal communications, however, and connoted general or specific meanings related to themes such



as greeting, asking praising, offering, speaking rejoicing and so forth. As a result, despite the frequent difficulty of analysis, many of these gestures may be observed in specific contexts and interpreted with some certainty. Overall, two types of gestures can be differentiated, consisting of independent and sequential. Gestures such as that exhibited by mummiform representations of Osiris with the arms folded across the chest exist in isolation and have complete meaning in and of themselves without reference to any other gesture, action or context, and may thus be termed "independent." More complex gesture patterns also exist, where a certain pose or gesture seen in representations actually occurred within a sequence of continuous actions. these sequential gestures are found in contexts such as ritual funerary activities and formalized expressions of praise and offering and are understandably more difficult to reconstruct and interpret. It should also be remembered that a number of similar gestures actually represent

different poses with different meanings. On the other hand, truly different gestures may sometimes function within the same range of meanings.



The Interpretation of Symbols



In a given representation, artifact or monument, one or several of the above symbolic dimensions may be present. In fact, it is rare that an Egyptian work has none of these elements. The presence of symbolic aspects must be addressed in any thorough analysis of Egyptian artistic and architectural work. Although different symbolic aspects may be emphasized in different settings or types of work, certain basic principles may be widely applied. Generally speaking, while a single, salient symbolic aspect is evident in a given representation or object, other aspects may reinforce this association or provide additional levels of meaning. Once a symbolic association has been established between an object and its symbolic referent, anything with the same characteristic may be said to be symbolic of that referent. Once an object or characteristic has become symbolic of a given referent, then its other characteristics may also be interpreted in terms of the same symbolic association. Thus, the heron is associated with the Nile primarily because of its aquatic habits, but its blue coloration also ties into the same association. The swallow is associated with the sun primarily because it flies out from its nest in the ground at

dawn and returns at dusk, but this association is reinforced by its red coloring. Interpreting the various types of symbols and discovering what they meant for the ancient Egyptians themselves is not always a simple matter. However, such an investigation can be approached from a number of physical and psychological viewpoints. Even at a purely Egyptological level, the interpretation and understanding of symbols requires a careful approach. Primarily, we must beware of assuming that a given aspect of a two or three dimensional representational work or architectural structure had some symbolic significance for the Egyptians without reasonable indication that this was the case. Because it developed in an open system of thought that allowed and encouraged the free association of ideas, Egyptian symbolism is easily misunderstood. This was as true for the ancient and medieval observers as it is for us today, as we see, for example, in many of the "interpretations" of Egyptian symbols recorded by Plutarch. For example, he tells us that the cat was regarded by the Egyptians as a symbol of the moon on account of its activity in the night and the "fact" that it produces increasing numbers of young (corresponding to the daily increase in the moon's light), and especially because its pupils expand and contract like the full and crescent moon. Indeed, the cat was associated with the moon, but how much if any of this reasoning was true for the ancient Egyptians' original association of the cat with the moon is difficult to ascertain. Even when care is taken in this regard, it must also be remembered that symbols can be fluid. Their meanings may certainly change over time, and it does not always follow that the symbolic significance of a given element in one composition will be identical in another work of earlier or later date. The symbols utilized in Egyptian art may also exhibit different meanings in different contexts



in the same period. In funerary contexts, feather patterning (rishi) may be symbolic of the wings of certain protective goddesses, or of the avian aspect of the ba of the deceased. Textual evidence suggests even more possibilities, associating or identifying the deceased with a hawk, a swallow or some other bird, so that in certain cases where context does not render a clear

choice, it is difficult to decide on the specific significance of such a symbolic element, or if there could be some kind of generic symbolism meant to embrace many or all of these possible ideas. At the same time, many different symbols may be used for the same symbolic referent, but in many cases relatively little study has been devoted to the reasons for the choices of given symbols in different settings. The Egyptians themselves were conscious of the ambiguity in their own symbolism and even seem to have encouraged it. Enigmatic statements in religious texts are not infrequently glossed with several divergent explanations, and the principle doubtless applies to representations as well as literary use of symbols. There is often a field or range of possible meanings for a given symbol, and while we may select a specific interpretation that seems most likely according to context we must remember that other symbolic associations may also be involved. This is not to say that ancient Egyptian symbolism is inchoate, inconsistent or imprecise, but that a flexible approach must be maintained in attempting to understand its workings. Successful analysis must avoid unfounded speculation, yet at the same time it must attempt to incorporate the intellectual flexibility that the Egyptians themselves display.

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Coptic Christian Symbolism

COPTIC CHRISTIAN PAINTINGS (INCLUDING ICONS) BY JIMMY DUNN



With the creation of Alexandria in 332 BC, Hellenization came to Egypt, together with first the art of the Greeks, and then that of the Romans, which began to overlay that of the more ancient Egyptian styles. It was in this setting that Christianity arrived in Egypt and it was here that the rich flavor of Coptic (Egyptian Christian) art evolved.

In Coptic, as well as other Christian art or for that matter, the scenes depicting battles and other notable events on pagan temple walls, were not in themselves art for arts sake. In these early periods, most people were illiterate, and thus many scenes from ancient Egyptian Christian churches might be better understood almost as graphic bibles, depicting famous topics in a manner suited to the common faithful of early Christianity.

In general, it might be said that Coptic Christian art evolved from unsophisticated, crude styles to a refined, highly developed one over time, and spreading from Alexandria southward. The art also varies by region due to the lack of more authoritarian influences in southern Egypt, where early styles were often highly variable.

Stylistically, Coptic painting differs from that of pagan Egypt in its emphasis on animal and plant ornamentation; less naturalistic rendering of the human form; simplified outline, color, and detail; and increasingly monotonous repetition of a limited number of motifs.

The integration of contrasting configurations, including classical, Egyptian, Greek-Egyptian and Persian pagan motifs, as well as Byzantine and Syrian Christian influence, led to a trend in Coptic art that is difficult to define, because a unity of style is not possible to trace. Unfortunately, early collections of Christian art were made without recording details of the sites from which they came, making it virtually impossible to trace artistic development through time. There is no way to tell, for example, how long classical and Greek-Egyptian motifs continued after the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. All that can be said is that Coptic art is a distinctive art, and that it differed from that of Antioch, Constantinople and Rome.

Some of the earliest Christian paintings in Egypt we have records of were probably those in the catacombs of Karmuz in Alexandria. Created towards the end of the third century, they no longer exist, but we know something about their theme. At Karmuz, there was a semi-circular apse within the antechamber that probably served as the Christian sanctuary, or chapel. It was adorned with a frieze that depicted the miracles of Christ which prefigured the Last Supper and the Eucharist. Here, Christ was portrayed enthroned and flanked by Saints Peter and Andrew, who present loaves of bread and fish to him. Left of this, inscriptions identified Christ and the Holy Virgin as being among the guests who witnessed the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana. Many of the scenes depict people in nature poses with fluid clothing before woodland backgrounds, a style suggestive of Roman art, particularly with regards to catacombs both in Egypt and in the rest of the Roman world.



Some of the oldest extant Christian art in Egypt can be found in the area of Bagawat in the al-Kharga Oasis in the Western Desert. The paintings in the various chapels and tombs of this region display a notable change from the earlier work in Alexandria, as well as an expansion of the iconographic repertory. Here, the famous Chapel of the Exodus, dating to the fourth century AD, is so called because of its graphic representations of the Hebrew Exodus to the Promised Land under Moses. Within the center of the copula ceiling of the chapel birds weave amongst networks of vine branches, a motif originating in the east but adopted by the Roman world and used extensively in Christian monuments, such as the mausoleum of St. Constantia in Rome (also dating to the fourth century). Other scenes in the chapel, most often rapidly

sketched, include Old Testament themes such as the sacrifice of Abraham, Daniel in the lions' den and Noah's ark, among others.



Another building in the region (Bagawat), known as the Chapel of Peace and dating to the fifth century, depicts large, hieratic figures arranged in perfect order. Though a Christian monument, Old Testament scenes are predominate. For example, among these works are portrayals of Adam and Eve after their sin, the sacrifice of Abraham, Daniel in the lions' den, Jacob, Noah's ark and the annunciation symbolizing the new covenant between God and his people.

As Christianity spread south along the Nile River, the oldest places of worship were often established in what was once pharaonic temples, though only occasional remains of the paintings on their wall may still be observed. These places of pagan worship that were converted to Christian use included temples at Philae, Abydos, Deir al-Bahri, Dandara, Luxor, Karnak, Madinat Habu as well as Wadi al-Sebua further south in Nubia, among others.



Theodosia flanked by St. Colluthus and St. Mary

However, some of the oldest surviving Christian art may be found at Antioch, where the Lady Theodosia had herself depicted in her funerary chapel with her arms outstretched in the attitude of prayer. She is flanked by St. Colluthus and St. Mary, who were both natives of the Antioch area. Here again, the style is quite different than earlier examples of Christian art. Theodosia's high social status is portrayed by her ornate garments with woven decorations as well as the general sumptuousness of her monument. Also depicted is Christ, represented between two angles. These images appear before animal and vegetal backdrops. The poses and faces of those depicted within this monument, as well as the folds of clothing treated in a simplified manner, place the images in the Byzantine context of the fifth or sixth centuries.



The rock church of Deir Abu Hinnis near Antinoe, which was hewn within an ancient quarry, has one of the oldest examples of ecclesial (related to a church) painting, which dates from the end of the sixth century. A frieze here which continues uninterrupted between scenes and is characterized by a variety of poses, depicts many episodes of Christ's life, including the massacre of the innocents by Herod, the flight of Elizabeth and John, the dream of Joseph and the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. Some evolution of Christ is recorded upon the walls of this church, for another frieze dating from the eighth century depicts Zechariah's life, with more rigid poses and stiff folds in the clothing. Then, within panels, a separate representation portrays the wedding at Cana and the resurrection of Lazarus.



The use of panels also became a common fashion among monastic complexes, particularly at Bawit and Saqqara, which flourished between the sixth and eighth centuries AD. In the oratories of the cells and in churches, the walls could present up to three tiers of adornment. The lowest tier of large panels would include a geometrical or floral motif, while the upper tiers show tall figures of standing monks and saints, or perhaps scenes narrating a story. This method seems to have looked back upon older methods, for in the pagan necropolises of Tuna al-Gebel and Alexandria, this same artistic device was in use during the third and second centuries BC. However, the scenes in at Bawit and Saqqara show cycles that are unique because of their early date, the variety of images and the superior workmanship of their artists. Here, scenes from the Old and New Testaments, such as the story of David, the cycle of the nativity and annunciation, the baptism of Christ and others mingle with depictions of equestrian saints and rows of saints and monks. Some niches are adorned with depictions of the Holy Virgin seated

on a throne holding the baby Jesus in front of her or nursing him, which are references to the divine motherhood of the Holy Virgin defined by the council of Ephesus in 431 AD.



Christ enthroned and rows of saints surrounding the Holy Virgin and Child at the Monastery of Apollo at Bawit

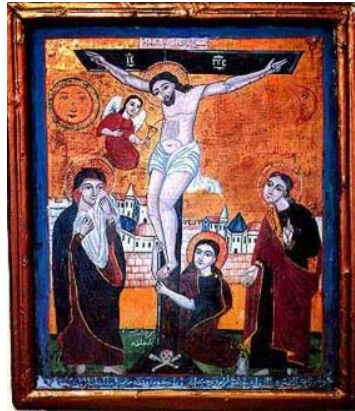
However, the most amazing images are those of the apocalyptic visions drawn from the biblical texts of Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel and John. Here, Christ is seated on a fiery chariot and surrounded by the figures of the four living creatures flying on seraphim wings strewn with eyes, while two angles bow as a sign of veneration. In the background is a starry sky, with the sun and moon personified by busts as was the convention in antiquity. They symbolize eternity. On a lower tier, the Virgin Mary stands among the apostles as an orant (a praying or kneeling figure), or seated on a throne with the baby Jesus, who she nurses. These represent a common composition that suggests the links between the apocalyptic vision with the twofold event of the death and resurrection of Christ and then his second coming at the Last Judgment.



Kellia (the Cells), just outside of the Western Delta, was an early center of isolated hermitages during the fourth century AD that grew, by the end of the seventh century AD, into a region of small anchoritic (hermit or near hermit) colonies. Here, there were no great compositions of narratives scenes such as those at Saqqara and Bawit. The scenes here were probably influenced by the the lifestyle of these lonely hermits. Adorning their walls were the likewise isolated examples of a bust of Christ, warrior saints and depictions of St. Menas. Other scenes are almost secular, depicting lambs and other animals such as tucks, lions, and quail (including unicorns), together with lush vegetation and scenes of the Nile river. Crosses, though not depicting the crucifixion are also common, sometimes adorned with jewels or weighed down with foliage,

pomegranates, censers or small bells. Rather than the death of Christ, these crosses evoke his triumph over death and his glory.

In Coptic art, Christ was almost always depicted as triumphant, reborn, benevolent and righteous and this is one of the most significant and continuous characteristics of Coptic art. In fact, the early Egyptian Christians did not delight in painting scenes of torture, death or sinners in hell.



One cross (sixth or seventh century AD) portrays, in its center, the bust of Christ giving a blessing. This scene was also found in a mosaic in St. Apollinaris in Classe at Ravenna, Italy, on flasks from the Holy Land in Monza and Babbio, Italy dating from about the same period. It was repeated in a Coptic manuscript dated from 906 AD, in Nubian paintings at Faras and Abdallah Nirqi dating to the ninth through eleventh centuries, and in Armenian manuscripts from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries AD.

The mid-seventh century brought the Arab conquest and Islam to Egypt, but this did little to stop the flow of Christian art in Egypt. Instead, the archaic Muslim incursion into Egypt saw a blossoming of great Christian iconographic programs, often covering more ancient works. This was no more true than in the monasteries of the Wadi Natrun. For example, an annunciation was discovered in the Church of the Holy Virgin which had been covered over by a scene depicting ascension in about 1225. The annunciation could have been created as early as about 710 AD, when Syrians purchased the monastery. This remarkable work is not only inspiring because of its grand style, but also its rich iconography. It depicts the Holy Virgin, seated on a throne, listening to the archangel's message. She is surrounded by four prophets, consisting of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, holding scrolls with Coptic inscriptions. In the background is the town of Nazareth. This theme is unique to Egypt.



A large part of this church's wall had been covered by up to three coats of paint. Therefore two paintings of the Virgin and Child, dating from the second half of the seventh century were discovered, together with another depicting Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who is holding the souls of the blessed in Haven. Later paintings adorn the walls of niches, including the ascension (rising of the body of Jesus into heaven), annunciation (when the Holy Virgin was told she would bare Christ), nativity (the birth of Christ) and dormition (The Holy Virgin's death, or "falling asleep").



Top: A scene from the Church of the Holy Virgin in the Monastery of the Syrians at Wadi Natrun of the Dormition; and bottom: of the nativity

Other monasteries at Wadi Natrun, such as al-Baramus and Anba Bishoi (Pshoi) also provide us with vestiges of ancient Christian art. Here, we find the encounter of Abraham with Melchizedek, which is in the simplistic style and colors of the oldest monastic paintings.



Also, in the monastery of St. Marcarius, within the sanctuary of Benjamin in the church of St. Macarius, we find a unique use of wood panels. For example, the twenty-four elders of the book of Revelation are depicted seated upon their thrones and embellished with precious stones, each holding an ornate chalice, but each of their heads was painted on a wooden disk. At the base of the cupola, each triangular wooden panel was painted with an immense figure of a winged seraph, with wings unfolding, to protect the sanctuary. Within the interior curve of the entrance arch was woodwork covered with medallions showing the still recognizable scenes of the embalming and burial of Christ. On the west wall, Christ is flanked by two angles beside equestrian and other saints. These paintings may date from a restoration in about 830 AD under the patriarch Jacob.



Next to this in the sanctuary of St. Mark, the adornments could date from 1010 through 1050 AD, when the evangelist's reliquary was brought to the monastery. This would reconcile with the characteristics of the Islamic Fatimid style, consisting of pointed arches and squinches. Here, the decorative theme, which is divided into two tiers at the level of the pendentives and in their squinches at the base of the cupola, is more complex. The upper tier is adorned with scenes from the Old and New Testaments, the former prefiguring the latter while the lower tier depicts angles, saints, the head of Christ, seraphim and the scene of the three young men in the furnace. These figures appear as the witnesses of the Christian faith and its intercessors, either by their ascetic life or their martyrdom.

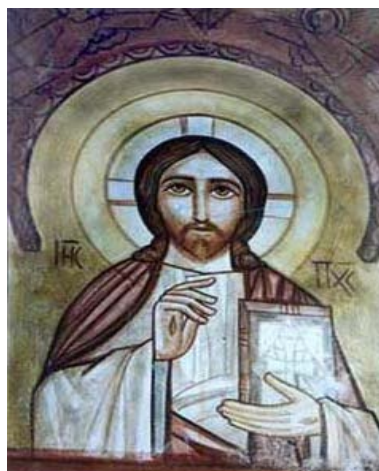
For twelfth century Christian art, we make look to the monasteries of Deir al-Shuhada and Deir al-Fakhuri in the desert near Esna (Isna) At Deir al-Shuhada, the image of Christ enthroned is depicted three times and two of these paintings show the apocalyptic vision that we find throughout Egypt. One of these portrays the bust of the Virgin Mary and St. John, which invokes the theme of the Deesis ("intercession" in Greek), which the Byzantine world linked with the Last Judgement. On another, Christ's feet surmount the sea of crystal mentioned in the book of Revelations (4:6) to symbolize the quenching of the saints' thirst and the separation of paradise from the earthly world.

There exists another scene with the theme of the deesis at Deir al-Abiad, better known as the White Monastery, in Sohag. It appears in the south apse beneath the depiction of a large cross around which a piece of cloth is wound. This dates to between the eleventh and twelfth century AD. A variety of crosses may also be found in the nave of the church, which is now

open to the sky. Some are identical to the once in the south apse, while others are entwined with designs and are similar to those that can be found in manuscripts dating to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.



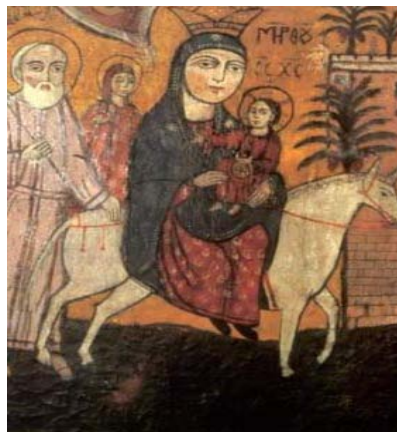
Christian art from the thirteenth through the fifteenth century is particularly well preserved in the Church of St. Anthony in the famous monastery by the same name near the Red Sea coast. The church was built at the beginning of the thirteenth century and has remained almost completely unaltered since then. The original decorations were undertaken by Master Theodore around 1232 -1233, while another painter worked in the monastery sometime before 1436. He was known as the painter of the paschal cycle. Hence, the paintings follow an iconographic theme established from the start, a fact which provides a cohesion rarely found anywhere else.



At the entrance to the church, visitors are today welcomed by large equestrian saints and holy monks. As they move into the sanctuary, other saints and patriarchs adorn the walls. Within the sanctuary, there are several tiers of depictions that lead the eyes of the beholders from scenes from the Old Testament to the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse, then to the Holy Virgin and Child on the east wall, and to the enthroned Christ above. There is a bust of Christ Pantocrator (ruler of the universe) in the cupola and there, he is surrounded by angels and seraphim (basically, a type of six winged angle). In the adjacent chapel called the Chapel of the Four Living Creatures, we once again find the theme of the apocalyptic vision of the enthroned Christ, flanked by the Holy Virgin and St. John.

Icons

The word "icon" is derived from the Greek "eikon" or from the Coptic word "eikonigow" both of which are similar in their pronunciation. Icons are actually somewhat difficult to define, even though they have a prominent place in the life and worship of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. They are representation or picture of a martyred or sanctified Christian personage so that they usually depict specific saints, group of saints, angels or Christ, as opposed to larger, more complex scenes. Sometimes they are purely portraits of a specific being, with little or no background. However, we also find groupings such as the Virgin Mary and Child and sometimes there might be somewhat elaborate backdrops to the persons depicted. However, other icons can depict biblical events, and other religious topics as well, though these seem to be in a minority among modern icons. Furthermore, the term's wider definition can apply to many paintings of a religious nature, whether movable or fixed.



In the earliest development of icon painting the artists worked directly on the wooden panel but later they began to cover the surface with a soft layer of gypsum onto which lines could be chiseled to control the flow of liquid gold.

Historians date the appearance of the iconographic style to the first three centuries of Christianity. Some archaeologists believe that icons were first popular in people's houses and later began to appear in places of worship, probably at the end of the 3rd century. By the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. their use was widespread. According to the Arab historian Al Makrizi, Pope Cyril I hung icons in all the churches of Alexandria in the year 420 A.D. and then decreed that they should be hung in the other churches of Egypt as well.

When Egypt turned increasingly towards Syria and Palestine after the schism in the fifth century, her saints and martyrs began to take on the stiff, majestic look of Syrian art. There began to be an expression of spirituality rather than naivety on the faces of the subjects, more elegance in the drawing of the figures, more use of gold backgrounds and richly adorned clerical garments.

The idea behind the use of icons in the Early Church is due to the unique experience the Church faced. Most Christians converts came from pagan cultures, many of them were illiterate. They had difficulty understanding Biblical teachings and their spiritual meanings, as well as the historical events that took place in the Bible and in the life of the Church. Therefore, the leaders of the Early Church permitted the use of religious pictures (icons) because the people were not

able to assimilate Christianity and its doctrine unaided by visual means. Therefore, these presentations aided the faithful in understanding the new religion.

Whether movable or fixed, these images must have been venerated as icons. The oldest icons in Egypt appear to go back to the fifth or sixth century. Among these, seven come from one tomb in Antinoe, among which are depictions of saints, a veiled woman, an angel and all very similar to Roman-Egyptian funerary portraits that were found in the Fayoum dating from an earlier period. Thus, the techniques of tempera painting on wooden panels survived in the art of the icon. In fact, just as the Fayoum portraits were placed in graves, the early Christian icons of Antinoe may have been placed near the dead to obtain the saint's intercession before God on behalf of the deceased.



The early Coptic Christian icons that followed such as a painting of Christ and Abbot Menas now in the Louvre Museum, of Bishop Abraham now in Berlin and of Saint Theodore in the Coptic Museum, differ from Byzantine works of the same period and are characterized by a local, monastic style. Facial features are simplified and painted with flat, muted colors, while the folds in clothing are spare and either vertical or curved.

By the seventh century, Coptic icons seem to have fallen from favor and in fact do not reappear until the eighteenth century. The reason for this is uncertain. The Coptic Church maintains that there was a movement to eliminate icons from churches on the grounds that they were being worshipped as graven images, prohibited by Exodus 20:4-5, though this decision may have very well have been influenced by Egypt's Muslim masters as well, for Icons did not disappear from much of the rest of the Eastern Christian world

However, from the eighteenth century on, icons were often dated and even signed. Hence, from the eighteenth century on, we learn that many of the painters were foreign, though in the simplification of forms, the use of flat colors and the bold delineation they are seen as Coptic in character.

The Characteristics of Coptic iconization follow certain symbolism that carries a meaningful message, though many of these attributes may be found in icons outside of the Coptic Church. Some of these characteristics are:

- Large and wide eyes symbolize the spiritual eye that look beyond the material world. The Bible says "the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be simple, thy whole body shall be full of light" [Matthew 6:22].
- Large ears listen to the word of God. The Bible says "if any man have ears to hear, let them hear" [Mark 4:23].
- Gentle lips to glorify and praise the Lord, for the Bible says "My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips" [Psalm 63:5].
- Small mouths, so that they cannot be the source of empty or harmful words.
- Small noses, because the nose is sometimes seen as sensual.
- Large heads, which imply that the figure is devoted to contemplation and prayer.
-

Some icons portray Saints who suffered and were tortured for their faith with peaceful and smiling faces, showing that their inner peace was not disturbed, even by the hardships they endured, and suffered willingly and joyfully for the Lord. When an evil character is portrayed on an icon, it is always in profile because it is not desirable to make eye contact with such a person and thus to dwell or meditate upon it.

Icons have a special significance in the Eastern Christian churches. Generally, Coptic Christians make no distinction between the qualities and characteristics of an icon and those of the person or people represented by the icon. Whatever powers the actual being portrayed had during his or her life, so to has the icons representation. Hence, in a certain respect, miraculous properties are attributed to Coptic Christian icons, as well as others in the Eastern Orthodox churches. In fact, there are many more icons from the Byzantine and Russian churches that are attributed with miraculous powers than in the Coptic Christian realm.

However, it should be noted that the modern Coptic Christian Church discourages the veneration of icons themselves. They make it clear that it is not the icon that must be respected, but rather the person or event it portrays. Yet, a traditional legend in the church would indicate otherwise.

It is said that an icon the Savior made without hands, goes back to the first century when king Abagar of Edessa (located between the two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, an area in eastern Iraq) sent a message with his envoy Ananias to the Lord Jesus Christ to ask if He could visit the king to heal him. The king suffered from diseases and he wished that Christ would come and live in his kingdom. Ananias the envoy was a talented artist, and tried to paint a picture of the Christ. However the glory and the perfect appearance of the Lord was so great that he was unable to do so. The story says that the envoy went back to the king with a piece of cloth that had an image of Christ's face. The image of the Holy Face of Christ healed the king of his diseases in the absence of Christ himself.

Therefore, any number of icons in Egypt are thought to have miraculous powers and their seems to be no specific need for a Coptic Icon to be ancient, though a few are. Some of the most venerated icons in the Coptic church include those of:

- Saint Damian and her forty virgins in the Shrine of Saint Damiana, near Bilqas, Mansura
- Saint George in the Old Church of Saint George, Mit Damsis, near Mit Ghamr
- The Holy Virgin of the Tree of Jesse in the Church of the Holy Virgin, Harat Zuwayla, Cairo
- They Holy Virgin in the al-Mu'allafa Chruch of the Holy Virgin, Old Cairo

- Saint Barsum al-'Aryan in the Church of Saint Barsum, Ma'sara, near Helwan (south of Cairo)
- Saint George in the Church of Saint George, Biba, Beni Suef
- Saint Theodore in Dair al-Sanquriya, Bani Mazar
- The Holy Virgin in the Church of the Holy Virgin, Gabal al-Tayr
- The Holy Virgin in the al-Muharraq Monastery of the Holy Virgin, al-Qusiya
- Saint Mercurius at the Monastery of Saint Mercurius, Qamula
- Saint George at the Monastery of Saint George, Dimuqrat, Asfun



Except for the icon of the Holy Virgin in the Harat Zuwayla, dating to the fourteenth century, the others listed above date to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.

Most of the icons with miraculous powers fall within five classifications, consisting of the fertility-granting icon, the healing icon, the weeping icon, the bleeding icon and the light emanating icon.

While western Christian churches have their stained glass and some statuary, we may sum up by saying that visually, the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Coptic Christian Churches in particular seem to be much more rich in visual art than their western counterparts (with a few exceptions).

Islamic Symbolism

ISLAMIC PATTERNS & GEOMETRY



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Geometric motifs were popular with Islamic artists and designers in all parts of the world, for decorating almost every surface, whether walls or floors, pots or lamps, book covers or textiles. As Islam spread from nation to nation and region to region, Islamic artists combined their penchant for geometry with existing traditions, creating a new and distinctive Islamic art. This art expressed the logic and order inherent in the Islamic vision of the universe.

The wide spectrum of intellectual treasures allowed Islamic scholars to quickly embrace Greek philosophy and mathematics, translating and disseminating this knowledge for posterity. The works of Euclid and Pythagoras were among the first to be translated into Arabic. The study of geometry also fed an ardent preoccupation with the stars and astronomy. All this in turn nourished the Arabic passion for creating infinite, decorative patterns. The cultivation of mathematical analysis, in particular, had a harmonising effect. Driven by the religious passion for abstraction and the related doctrine of unity -- al-tawhid, the Muslim intellectuals recognized in geometry the unifying intermediary between the material and the spiritual world.

The development of this new distinctive art, in part may have been due to the discouragement of images in Islam on basis that it could lead to idolatry. For the Muslim, in recognising the reality of the fundamental formula of Islam: "There is no divinity other than God". He sees in figurative art, a fundamental error or illusion in projecting the nature of the absolute into the relative, by attributing to the relative an autonomy that does not belong to it. (See [Aniconism](#)) In this way, Islamic artists did not seek to express themselves as such, but rather aimed to ennoble matter. Whilst this tradition may have frustrated some Islamic artists, others took up the challenge and became the greatest pattern makers of their time. Instead of covering buildings and other surfaces with human figures, they developed complex geometric decorative designs, as well as intricate patterns of vegetal ornament (such as the arabesque), with which to adorn palaces and mosques and other public places.

Alternatively, the development of infinitely repeating patterns can represent the unchanging laws of God. Muslims are expected to observe certain rules as were originally set forth by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), characterised by the "Pillars of Faith". In this way the rules of construction of geometric patterns provide a visual analogy to religious rules of behavior.

"... as the soul of an individual seeks sources and reasons for its existence it is led inward and away from the three-dimensional world towards fewer and more comprehensive ideas and principles"
(Keith Critchlow)



Pattern & symbols

Both the contemplation of and the creative skill in making patterns lead in their own way to an understanding of the perfections of Universal Nature as it moves the elements. Islamic pattern, unique as an art form, is also unitary in its aim and function. Symbols can exhaust verbal explanation but verbal explanation can in no way exhaust symbols -and the symbols inherent in Islamic pattern and geometry are directed towards that undifferentiated unity.

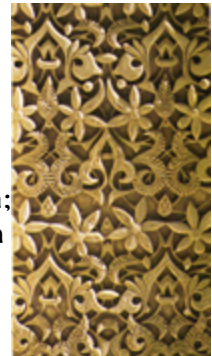
Thus, the circle, and its centre, are the point at which all Islamic patterns begin and is an apt symbol of a religion that emphasizes one God, symbolising also, the role of Mecca, the center of Islam, toward which all Moslems face in prayer. The circle has always been regarded as a symbol of eternity, without being and without end, and is not only the perfect expression of justice-

equality in all directions in a finite domain--but also the most beautiful parent of all polygons, both containing and underlying them.

From the circle comes three fundamental figures in Islamic art, the triangle, square and hexagon. The triangle by tradition is symbolic of human consciousness and the principle of harmony. The square, the symbol of physical experience and the physical world-or materiality-and the hexagon, of Heaven. Another symbol prevalent in Islamic art is the star and has been the chosen motif for many Islamic decorations. In Islamic iconography the star is a regular geometric shape that symbolizes equal radiation in all directions from a central point. All regular stars -- whether they have 6, 8, 10, 12, or 16 points -- are created by a division of a circle into equal parts. The center of the star is center of the circle from which it came, and its points touch the circumference of the circle. The rays of a star reach out in all directions, making the star a fitting symbol for the spread of Islam.

One such use of the of the star in mosaics is in 'God's spider web', the very name of which evokes the 'miracle of the spider': When the Prophet (pbuh), to escape his persecutors, fled from Mecca, he and his companion Abu Bakr hid for three days and three nights in a cave. The hostile Meccans rode out in search of them, and on the first morning they reached the entrance to the cave. But a spider had spun its net across it, a dove had laid its eggs on the threshold, and a wild rose-bush had stretched out its blossoming branches, so that the pursuers thought that no one could possibly have recently entered the cave. The mosaic spider's web, however, resembles its model only remotely. It is in fact a geometrical rosette, which begins as a star and then extends outwards in interlacing bands, that follow a rigorous plan, and form a rich extensive network. Several such complete designs can intertwine with one another on one surface, and then they form, especially when they originate in stars with varying numbers of rays, a shimmering planetarium, in which each line starts from a centre and leads to a centre, a motif that once again strongly evokes the Islamic idea of omnipresent unity.

Even though the geometric patterns, consisted of, or were generated from, such simple forms as the circle and the square, they were combined, duplicated, interlaced, and arranged in intricate combinations, becoming one of the most distinguishing features of Islamic art. However, these complex patterns seem to embody a refusal to adhere strictly to the rules of geometry. As a matter of fact, geometric ornamentation in Islamic art suggests a remarkable amount of freedom; in its repetition and complexity, it offers the possibility of infinite growth and can accommodate the incorporation of other types of ornamentation as well. In terms of their abstractness, repetitive motifs, and symmetry, geometric patterns have much in common with the so-called arabesque style seen in many vegetal designs. Calligraphic ornamentation also appears in conjunction with geometric patterns.



Many of the patterns used in Islamic art look similar, even though they decorate different objects. They are two dimensional both in form and intent and are made up of a small number of repeated geometric elements that create a complex whole by repeating a few elements and. This practical and useful level of operation of archetypal expressions in no way diminishes or reduces their effectiveness as symbols, on the contrary it merely reinforces the fact that what we take to be simple and 'in the nature of things' has become profound to the point of us becoming

oblivious to it, in much the same way that we find ourselves in an environment with a great deal of noise for any appreciable length of time we cut out our awareness of that noise.

Source: <http://mathforum.org/alejandre/circles.html> - Download 10/1/2010