

## Mimetic Devotion and Dress in Some Monastic Portraits from the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit\*

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For the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit in Middle Egypt there is good archaeological documentation, a wealth of primary written sources mainly in the form of inscriptions, and a long history of scholarship illuminating both the site and the paintings at the center of this study.<sup>1</sup> The archaeological site (figure 1) is extensive, and densely built. The many paintings, usually dated to the sixth and seventh centuries, survive in varying states of preservation from a range of functional contexts, however in this discussion I focus on

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<sup>1</sup> The main archaeological publications include: Jean Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouït, Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, Mémoires*, vol. 12 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1904); Jean Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouït, Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, Mémoires*, vol. 39 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1916); Jean Maspéro, "Fouilles exécutées à Baouït, Notes mises en ordre et éditées par Etienne Drioton," *Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, Mémoires*, vol. 59, 1 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1931); Jean Maspéro, "Fouilles exécutées à Baouït, Notes mises en ordre et éditées par Etienne Drioton," *Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, Mémoires*, 59.2, (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1943); Hans-Georg Severin, "Bawit. Archaeology, Architecture and Sculpture," in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, Aziz. S. Atiya, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1991) 363-366; and, Dominique Bénazeth and Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya, *Jean Clédat, Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouït, MIFAO*, 111 (Cairo, Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1999). On recent explorations at the site and further studies, see Anne Boud'hors and Catherine Louis, eds., *Études coptes XI. Trièzième journée d'études (Marseille, 7-9 juin 2007)*, Études d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne. Cahiers de la Bibliothèque copte 17 (Paris: De Boccard, 2010). Hjalmar Torp discusses the architectural setting of the monastery at Bawit as appropriate accommodation for the loose variation on coenobitic monastic life developed by its founder, Apa Apollo: "Le monastère copte de Baouït. Quelques notes d'introduction," *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 9 (1981), 1-12; and "The Laura of Apa Apollo at Bawit. Considerations on the Founder's Monastic Ideals and the South Church," *Arte Medievale*, N.S. 5.2 (2006), 9-46. On the paintings: Antonio Iacobini, *Visioni dipinte: immagini della contemplazione negli affreschi di Bawit* (Rome: Viella, 2000).

monastic portraits from only two building complexes at the northern edge of the site that were excavated in the major campaigns of the early twentieth century: in Room 20 within a monastic dwelling and reception Room 6 within a series of public rooms (figure 2).<sup>2</sup> In what follows I explore pictorial strategies utilizing dress to represent types of ascetic sanctity, express spiritual affinity, and inculcate mimetic devotion.

### *Portraits in Room 20*

These portraits employ what I have termed *schematic* and *ideal* modes of monastic dress. Both modes were represented on the eastern wall of Room 20 in an extended program encompassing a group portrait in the small apse and a single figure on the wall to the north of the apse (figures 3-6). The clothing of the figure on the wall announces his ascetic, monastic way of life: a plain dark tunic, with a light-colored cloth mantle, a rope belt, and sandals. I refer to this mode of dress as *schematic* much as the term *schema* in Greek and Coptic (*habitus* in Latin) was used in late antiquity to refer to the recognizable outward form that identified a person, whether that person was an emperor, a soldier or, as here, a monk.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, although *schema* is routinely translated as “habit” in English when it is used in the monastic context, here I use the term more inclusively to refer to the paradigmatic appearance of a monk. That is to say, my use of the terms *schema*, scheme, and schematic signifies dress as the key to a figure’s recognizability. The ascetic scheme depicted here does not necessarily document specific items of clothing worn by the monk portrayed or the by fathers and monks at the Monastery of Apa Apollo during the later sixth or

<sup>2</sup> Room 6 has long been identified as a reception room: e.g., Maspero, “Fouilles,” p. viii: Ce n’est ni une cellule ni une chapelle proprement dite; c’est un lieu de réception, où les voyageurs venus en pèlerinage chez Apa Apollô devaient séjourner quelques temps.” On the evolution of this room through successive building phases, see, e.g., Torp, “Le monastère copte de Baouît,” 4-7.

<sup>3</sup> Paraskevė Kalamara developed her persuasive argument about the inclusive paradigmatic use of the term *schema* in her dissertation, “Le système vestimentaire à Byzance du IV<sup>e</sup> jusqu’à la fin du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle,” 2 volumes (Doctoral thesis, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1995), e.g., at 26-29 and 72-8; see also note 35. Great variation in dress is apparent in the portraits of the *Historia Monachorum* although the descriptions are selective rather than comprehensive, often singling out one or two items to stand synecdochally for the full habit: *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, Translated by Norman Russell, Introduction by Benedicta Ward SLG (Kalamazoo and Oxford: Cistercian Press, 1981).

early seventh century when the portrait was painted.<sup>4</sup> Upon discovery the figure on the wall was identified as “probablement” Apa Jeremiah and I will refer to this figure by that name although the identification is by no means secure (figures 3-4). No inscription was recorded for this figure and the painting no longer survives, so the portrait is known only from these two black-and-white photographs. The short grey hair, long beard and long face of contemporaneous portraits of Apa Jeremiah, leader of a monastery at Saqqara during the late fifth and early sixth centuries, suggest that this portrait might well represent that monastic leader.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the two sites have much in common and should be considered in tandem.<sup>6</sup> We know little else about that Apa Jeremiah except that he was considered saintly, revered during his lifetime, and that he was a priest as well as a monk. This figure is haloed and the cross on his tunic at the center of his chest would seem to indicate his sanctity in some way. No article of clothing – no clerical vestment – securely identifies this monk as a priest, however the cross that crowns his staff renders a basic monastic possession into an emblem of spiritual authority, and may have alluded to his priestly status.<sup>7</sup>

Within the lower zone of the apse (Coptic Museum 8012), monastic saints represented behind rows of apostles to either side of

<sup>4</sup> See Philip Oppenheim, *Das Mönchskleid im christlichen Altertum* (Essen: Hans Driewer, 1964); Adalbert de Vogüé, “Aux origines de l’habit monastique (IIIe – IXe siècle).” *Studia Monastica* 43 (2001), 7-20. For overviews focusing on Egypt, see, e.g., Karel C. Innemée, *Ecclesiastical Vestments in Nubia and the Christian Near East* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), and Nicole Morfin-Gourdier, “Costume of the Religious,” *CoptEncyc*, 2, 650-655.

<sup>5</sup> Examples from Saqqara: Coptic Museum 1719 and 1725 as identified by, e.g., Marguerite Rassart-Debergh, “La décoration architecturale du monastère de Saqqara.” *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 9 (1981), 9-124 and plates 1-28, at 71 and 77.

<sup>6</sup> J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1906-1907)* (Cairo, Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1908); J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1907-1908* (Cairo, Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1909); J.E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara 1908-1909, 1909-1910* (Cairo, Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1912); Paul van Moorsel and Mathilde Huijbers, “Repertory of the Preserved Wall Paintings from the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara,” *Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia*, eds. Hjalmar Torp et al. (Rome: Bretschneider, 1981), 125-186 and plates I-XXX.

<sup>7</sup> The staff is described as a necessary monastic possession in, e.g., the Pachomian rule and represented several late antique portraits of monks, such as the limestone funerary stela of Apa Shenoute in Berlin, Staatsmuseum. The staff came to be used as a liturgical insignia of bishops and the Coptic patriarch, however this figure is not portrayed as either of these high-ranking clerics: Archbishop Basilios “Liturgical vestments,” *CoptEncyc*, 5, 1475-1479, at 1468. See also Nicole Morfin-Gourdier, “Costume of the Religious,” 650-655.

the Virgin Mary wear the same garments as the apostles, white tunics and mantles ornamented with paired black stripes (figures 5-6). Inscriptions written in black against the golden background identify these figures as monastic leaders, holy Apas. On the left side an inscription identifies the blessed father Patermouthis; and there is a blessed father whose inscribed name does not survive.<sup>8</sup> On the right, an inscription names the holy Father Macarius of the monastery of Grnge (Gergi?), whose name may be listed again with an inscription for Father Kollouthos, and another inscription naming Apa Phib of the place of Assiut, however it is not clear to which figures those inscriptions might refer.<sup>9</sup> I characterize apas in apostolic dress as *ideal* because the term, borrowed from classical Greek and Roman art, carries associations of mimetic emulation, that is deliberate copying of exemplary forms, especially portraits as forms of divinities and heroes.<sup>10</sup> These portrayals re-figure the monastic fathers as apostolic and, with the apostles in the verdant setting below, they bear witness to the vision of Christ in heaven above, enthroned within a mandorla between the sun and the moon.

### Contexts

Below the portrait of Apa Jeremiah, all along the wall to the north (left) of the apse, is a low platform apparently for use as a dais. The apse (here I use “apse” generically only to indicate a semicylindrical recess covered by a semi-dome) was located in the

<sup>8</sup> Inscription no. 443, Maspero, “Fouilles,” 128 and notes 3-4: translating “+NIŌT APA PATERMO[U]TE” as our father Patermouthis, and for “PEMEN APA” suggesting that the name is missing; however, the latter might well refer to the well-known monastic saint, Apa Poemen, simply reversing the usual order of title followed by name.

<sup>9</sup> Inscription no. 442, Maspero, “Fouilles,” 127-8: PAPA KOLTHE, PAPA MAKARE, O AGIOS APA MAKARE PATMONĒG<sup>R</sup>NGE, PAIŌT APA PHB PKAH SIOOUT. Perhaps G<sup>R</sup>NGE is to be associated with Gergi: E. Amélineau, *La géographie de l'Égypte à l'époque copte* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1893), 184.

<sup>10</sup> See Elaine K. Gazda, “Roman Sculpture and the Ethos of Emulation: Reconsidering Repetition,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97, *Greece in Rome: Influence, Integration, Resistance* (1995), 121-156. I use the term as it is now applied to Roman copies of Greek sculpture, which were not intended as precise copies in every detail, but as “deliberately emulative, revivalistic works” (137) but which repeated types of bodily forms as “bearers of Roman meaning, signifiers of Roman virtues and values” (139). As in the monastic wall paintings, individual identity in ideal Roman portraits resided in facial features. A kind of ideal representation seems to have been practiced in funerary portraiture: T. K. Thomas, *Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture: Images for This World and the Next* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

center of the eastern wall, the short side of a small rectangular room that was oriented from west to east, presenting a plan reminiscent of a small church or chapel.<sup>11</sup> Because of its diminutive scale the apse may have served as a focus for prayer rather than a locus for the celebration of the eucharist, however smaller niches to either side may have served as liturgical furnishings. Unfortunately, no evidence confirms the function of the apse.

A painted photograph from the excavation report (figure 5) reconstructs the apse as it would have looked before it incurred much of the damage that makes the surviving painting so difficult to read (figure 6). Yet, this damage provides evidence of the long life span of the apse during a period of rapid growth and bustling change at the monastery. Made for another room elsewhere in the monastery, then moved fairly soon after its creation in the sixth or seventh century to Room 20, the painted apse was inserted into a wall that was not quite thick enough to accommodate it, resulting in damage around the edges of the apse.<sup>12</sup> Those areas may have been repainted in antiquity as repainting was commonly done, however no paint survived in those areas at the time of discovery; nor did the arch and columns that once surrounded the apse (figure 3).<sup>13</sup> The late antique transfer of the apse has not been addressed in art historical studies, despite the pressing questions it raises about how reuse in a new setting might affect the ascription of meaning.<sup>14</sup> Although the larger-scale portrait on the wall seems to have been painted by a different hand, possibly to accompany a previous apse painting, the portrait with the apse painting came to constitute a program for the eastern wall of Room 20. Questions of repainting and phases of use arise within the niche as well. Consider the two inscriptions for Apa Makarius (figures 5-6). The longer inscription around his head is more carefully spaced and written. Does the

<sup>11</sup> Maspero, "Fouilles," 31: the room measures about 3 m. 20 (3.4 yards or 10 feet) by 4 m 16 (4.549 yards or 13.647 feet).

<sup>12</sup> Maspero, "Fouilles," 32.

<sup>13</sup> The decorative arch currently surrounding the niche in its installation in the Coptic Museum was taken from a niche in Room 1 that had been severely damaged by the time of its discovery.

<sup>14</sup> The very fact of the transfer opens entirely unsuspected avenues of inquiry for monastic painting into issues of ownership and valuation. How would this transfer have been negotiated and at what level within the monastic hierarchy? Important economic contextualization is provided by Jean Gascou, "Monasteries, Economic Activities of," *Copt EnCyc*, 5, 1639-45; Mariachiara Giorda, "Monastic Property in Late Antique Egypt," *Coptica* 8 (2009) 1-20 at 7-8; and Sarah J. Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts relating to the Hermopolite Monetary of Apa Apollo* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 2000).

shorter inscription (above and to the left) update the longer one, or comment upon it? Certainly, the two should be read together. Moreover, the overall visual program includes not only the figures and their identifying inscriptions, but also the formal inscriptions and graffiti on the walls that addressed prayers to the holy persons in the painting, to the monks of the monastery, or simply recorded the names of those to be remembered. All inscriptions indicate that prayer was an essential component of the apse composition.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in Room 6 (figures 7-9), inscribed prayers, some of which can be assigned fairly secure dates, accumulated over the course of at least two centuries of active use.<sup>16</sup> Contextual histories of the paintings, including both changes of location and the accumulation of inscriptions, underscore the need for attributing ranges of dates reflecting the term of use (rather than absolute points of origin). My inquiry, then, considers the monastic portraits within their immediate compositions, as parts of more extensive and changeable overall programs and, to the extent that it is possible, within the functional contexts of the rooms in which they were found.

#### *Portraits in Room 6*

Whereas the paintings of Room 20 adorned one room within a complex of small rooms at least partly domestic in function, Room 6 belonged to a complex of larger reception rooms more public in both scale and audience, yet with less resemblance to a church in orientation or accommodation. The painted apse of the east wall of Room 6 (Coptic Museum 7118) is larger as well, although similar in subject matter to that in Room 20. The composition is also much better preserved and was recently conserved for display in the Coptic Museum. All motifs in this larger composition, including formal inscriptions, were carefully placed and executed meticulously so that there is no doubt all were executed at the same time according to an integrated design that placed greater emphasis on the separation of dark blue-grey and bright white backgrounds of

<sup>15</sup> Maspero, "Fouilles," 128: records an inscription, no. 444, written in red to the right of this niche (this and all following English translations are my own, following the French translations): "Jesus Christ: watch over my father Apa Phoibammon, the father of the cell of wine-pressers. Amen." This was the only completely preserved and translated inscription for Room 20.

<sup>16</sup> Maspero, "Fouilles," viii, notes the use of a name with Greek and Arabic components in inscr. no. 222, for George, son of Sergios, also known as Malek Abdallah, son of Amr, dated to the eighth century. The inscription is translated on p. 90 and reproduced on pl. XXVc.

the upper and lower zones than the composition in Room 20 although here, too, the apostles stand out against the green surrounding them. As is apparent in this watercolor and other documentation recording the apse *in situ* in Room 6, this apse also interrupted a previous wall treatment, overlapping a large formal inscription painted along the wall above the niche (figures 8-9).<sup>17</sup> This apse composition also employs the pictorial strategy of ideal figuration by apostolic dress, although here the monastic saints have been placed at the ends of the rows of apostles flanking Mary and the child Christ. Photographs of the inside of the niche, opening up the curving walls to our inspection (figure 9), present monastic saints, again named by inscriptions. The excavators understood these inscriptions to read, “the holy Apa Paul of Psilikous” and “our father Apa Naberho.”<sup>18</sup> The monastic saints wear garments matching those of the apostles in every detail: white tunics and their light-colored mantles are ornamented with paired black stripes, dots, and a gamma-shaped motif that shelters a black dot. Each apostle and monk-apostle carries a gemmed codex. Additional inscriptions and accumulated graffiti – several hundred on the walls of this larger room – offer important testimonies to the perceived intercessory roles of the holy figures portrayed in the paintings.

Since the discovery at the turn of the twentieth century of the apse paintings at the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, and very similar paintings at the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara, historians of Coptic art have noted the inclusion of monastic figures among apostles as comparable to the well-known literary *topos* likening monks to apostles.<sup>19</sup> Also well known is the parallel casting of monks as prophets or prophet-like, as Christlike, and much more commonly, as angels or angelic.<sup>20</sup> As of yet, however,

<sup>17</sup> Maspero, “Fouilles,” p. vi, inscription no. 58, rendered in a more accurate translation on p. and 63: “I, John the painter, I have been judged worthy to paint this vault and to plaster it. Pray for me that the Lord will have mercy upon me.” Consequently, another painted niche must have occupied this space previously.

<sup>18</sup> Maspero, “Fouilles,” 146, as NABRHO and Paul “MPSILIKOUS.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Clédât, “Nouvelles recherches à Baouît (Haute-Égypte), campagnes 1903-1904,” *Comptes Rendus des séances de l'année. Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 48.5 (1904), 517-526. Soon followed by Maspero, “Fouilles,” vii: “Il ne faut pas trop s'étonner de voir ces deux illustrations locales figurer parmi des apôtres sur le pied d'égalité. On sait que Schnoudi, le dans une prediction posthume, n'avait-il pas dit à son sujet: “Le maître Paul et devenue le treizième apôtre: toi, tu sera la quatorzième.” Recently, Iacobini, *Visioni Dipinti*, 63.

<sup>20</sup> As discussed in, e.g., Derek Krueger, “Typological Figuration in Theodoret of Cyrillus’s *Religious History* and the Art of Postbiblical Narrative,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 5.3 (1997), 393-419; Georgia Frank, *The Memory of the Eyes: Pilgrims to Living Saints in Christian Antiquity*, The Transformation of the Classical

the range, strategy and the goals of such typological figuration within the paintings have not been the subject of sustained art historical analysis. This oversight may be due, in part, to such compositional strategies for the apas-as-apostles, for example, as isocephaly (that is, aligning the heads at the same height), the massing of figures and repetition of clothing motifs, and locating the monks at the ends of rows of figures nearly identical but for their faces, hair, and beards. Hiding monks at the edges of crowds of apostles inside the curving space of the apse is also an effective strategy for building surprise into the composition. The addition of two figures among the apostles is difficult to grasp unless the apse is seen up close and from directly in front. When the figures are visible, they appear at first glance to be apostles. Such strategies successfully assimilate the monks to the apostles, naturalize them as apostles, and mask their monastic identities. Monastic and other viewers gain access to their hidden monastic identities by reading inscriptions that, although formatted just like the inscriptions for the rest of the group, by their length and content separate these figures from the group and further particularize their identities. In other words, art historians may have followed pictorial cues not to single out these figures for special attention. One practical hindrance to modern studies attempting to foreground these figures has been the difficulty in matching their names to their saintly lives and thus to helpfully descriptive texts about them. In other words, because their back-stories have not been immediately available to us, these figures remain portraits of unknown masqueraders. These figures need interpretation and dress offers a useful approach, so first I look beyond these images for dress expressions within the wider world of late antiquity.

### *Focusing on dress*

Although dress is now recognized as an essential tool for the presentation and performance of identity, dress as social discourse is a relatively new and promising area of art history. One reason for the art historical neglect of these figures and their dress is certainly due to the traditionally low status of dress as a valid subject of academic art historical research. Before the 1960s instead of “dress

Heritage (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2000); see also James A. Francis, “Living Icons: Tracing a Motif in Verbal and Visual Representation from the Second to Fourth Centuries C.E.,” *American Journal of Philology* 124 (2003), 575-600.



studies,” the inclusive term we use now, the “history of costume” then was mainly the province of women scholars and located in museums rather than in the academy.<sup>21</sup> The identification of items of culturally stereotypical costume, hairstyles and other aspects of grooming offered valuable assistance to efforts toward dating and attribution, and served as an adjunct to meaning understood to be located in more important iconographic themes and in style. In the 1950s that estimation of clothing as subsidiary began to change when sociologists and social historians came to investigate social interactions and social discourse as performed through dress.<sup>22</sup> A new phase of art historical study for late antique dress subjects began when the historian Ramsay MacMullen published in *The Art Bulletin* his reading of the key role of dress in the *Res Gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus in the articulation and ongoing negotiation of social status by the elite of late antiquity through their own clothing and that of their households.<sup>23</sup> Despite the gravitas lent by MacMullen to the study of dress in late antique culture and subsequent considerations of dress by historians, there have been few contributions by art historians.<sup>24</sup> In this inquiry, I build upon

<sup>21</sup> Lou Taylor, “Doing the Laundry? A Reassessment of Object-Based Dress History,” *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body, and Culture* 2.4 (1998), 337-58; Jonathan Edmondson, and Allison Keith, “Introduction: From Costume History to Dress Studies,” in Jonathan Edmondson and Allison Keith, *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, Studies in Greek and Roman Social History I (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 1-17.

<sup>22</sup> E.g., Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959); Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*, translated by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1990, 1983 paperback), orig. *Système de la mode* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967).

<sup>23</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, “Some Pictures in Ammianus Marcellinus,” *The Art Bulletin* 46. 4 (December, 1964), 435-455. Meyer Rheinhold’s work on status emblems appeared soon thereafter: “On Status Symbols in the Ancient World,” *The Classical Journal* 64.7 (April, 1969) 300-304 and “Usurpation of Status and Status Symbols in the Roman Empire,” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 20, 2/3 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 1971) 275-302. See also Mary Harlow, “Clothes Make the Man: Power Dressing and Elite Masculinity in the Later Roman World,” in Leslie Brubaker and Julia M. H. Smith, *Gender in the Early Medieval World, East and West, 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 44-69.

<sup>24</sup> Only in the 1970s did dress study begin to take hold among art historians and archaeologists within the academy: e.g., Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993; New York: Viking Press, 1978). Notable contributions by historians include: Stephen J. Davis, “Fashioning a Divine Body: Coptic Christology and Ritualized Dress,” *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2005), 335-62; Caroline T. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies: Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); and Rebecca Krawiec, ““Garments of Salvation”: Representations of Monastic Clothing in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Early Christian*

several recent studies that share a particular outlook encompassing a multiplicity of Christian attitudes toward dress and, notably, recognize instances of the conflation of clothing with the body and soul of the wearer.<sup>25</sup> This observation has long been made within the context of baptismal ritual dress but is now also understood as critically important for understanding how monastic dress worked toward the monk's salvation.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, although these portraits may not document actual monastic dress, art historical inquiry into these different pictorial strategies for figuration through dress should contribute to our understanding of the role of the monastic habit in the monk's salvation.

Inquiry into the history of monastic dress and the role of dress in the construction of monastic identity began in the 1930s with studies by Philip Oppenheim of types of garments included in habits attested by monastic rules, the tradition of symbolic

*Studies* 17.1 (2009) 125-150. For a recent overview of Late Antique dress from an art historical perspective, see Maria G. Parani, "Defining Personal Space: Dress and Accessories in Late Antiquity," in *Objects in Context, Objects in Use. Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity*, Luke Lavan, Ellen Swift and Toon Putzeys, eds., with the assistance of Adam Gutteridge, *Late Antique Archaeology* 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 497-529; and see notes 3 to 4 above. In contrast, the study of dress based on the many preserved textiles from Late Antique Egypt is a well-published field. An excellent recent overview: Frances Pritchard, *Clothing Culture: Dress in Egypt in the First Millennium AD. Clothing from Egypt in the Collection of The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester* (Manchester: Whitworth Art Gallery, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> As in note 23 above and, e.g., Kristi Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress: Gender, Virtue, and Authority*, Routledge Studies in Ancient History (New York and London: Taylor and Francis, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> For clothing in baptism: see Johannes Quasten, "The Garment of Immortality," *Miscellanea Liturgica in onore di sua Eminenza il cardinale Giacomo Lercaro*, Rome, 1966, I, 391-401; Sebastian Brock, "Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition." Margo Schmidt, and Carl F. Geyer (eds.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter*, Eichstatter Beiträge, 4 (Regensburg: Pustet, 1981): 11-38; rept. in S. Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (London: Variorum, 1992), XI; and Jonathan Z. Smith, "The Garments of Shame." *History of Religions* 5, 2 (Winter, 1996) 217-238. On the habit's relationship to body and soul: Rebecca Krawiec, "'Garments of Salvation'"; Mariachiara Giorda, "Does the Cowl Make the Monk? A Monastic Accessory during the First Centuries of Egyptian Monasticism," in Antoine De Moor and Cäcilia Fluck, *Dress Accessories of the 1<sup>st</sup> Millenium AD from Egypt. Proceedings of the 6<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Research Group 'Textiles of the Nile Valley,' Antwerp, 2-3 October 2009* (Tiel: Lanoo, 2011), 182-187. This line of inquiry raises questions concerning materiality, ornamentation, and representation in the paintings, which might be subsumed under the heading of what Lynda Coon has called "cosmetic theology." Lynda L. Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

interpretation first attested in the late fourth century by Evagrius Ponticus but soon widespread, as well as archaeological and mainly pictorial evidence for monastic dress.<sup>27</sup> Subsequent work by a number of scholars has led to increasingly precise definitions of terms and a good sense of the chronological development of the collection of garments understood as constituting the habit in early Christian Egypt.<sup>28</sup> Scholars have recognized a variety of habits, extending beyond overly stark distinctions between Pachomian coenobitic monasticism on the one hand and, on the other, Antonian anchoritic asceticism, however little attention has been paid to reflections in dress of a wide range of monastic ascetic practice, or the multiple social settings for monastic practice, including interactions with the secular world.<sup>29</sup> Apa Apollo's monastery, for example, was a loosely organized semi-coenobitic community including anchorites and those who retreated "to the mountain" of the desert escarpment for limited periods of time.<sup>30</sup> At some point after the end of the fifth century, it became a double monastery, with a population of female monks.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the monastery accommodated male and female visitors from local villages, and pilgrims from farther afield, who left their inscribed prayers – along with the prayers of monks – on the walls of Room 6. Accordingly,

<sup>27</sup> Philip Oppenheim, *Das Mönchskleid im christlichen Altertum*, Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte, 28 (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1931) and *Symbolik und religiöse Wertung des Mönchskleides im christlichen Altertum* Theologie des Christlichen Osten II (Munster: Aschendorff, 1932); Karel C. Innemée, *Ecclesiastical Vestments in Nubia*; René-Georges Coquin, "À propos des vêtements des moines égyptiens." *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 31 (1992) 3-23; and Morfin-Gourdier, "Costume of the Religious," 650-655.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Coquin, "À propos des vêtements;" Sofia Tovar, "The Terminology of Egyptian Monastic Garments," in *Material Culture and Well-Being in Byzantium (400-1453)*, eds. M. Grünbart, E. Kislinger, A. Muthesius, and Ch. Stathakopoulos (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 219-224; and Maria Mossakowska-Gaubert, "Les tuniques à manches courtes et sans manches utilisés par les moines égyptiens (IVe-début du VII siècle)" *Antiquité Tardive* 12 (2004), 152-167.

<sup>29</sup> As in, e.g., Innemée, *Ecclesiastical Vestments*, esp. 90-128.

<sup>30</sup> A semi-anchoritic tradition perhaps especially associated with Middle Egypt: Tim Vivian, "Saint Paul of Tamma and the Life of the Cell," in *Words to Live By: Journeys in Ancient and Modern Egyptian Monasticism*, Cistercian Studies Series 207 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2005), 139-202, at 143, suggesting that Apa Apollo was one of the best known figures of a "specifically Middle-Egyptian tradition."

<sup>31</sup> Daniel F. Stramara, "Double Monasticism in the Greek East, Fourth through Eighth Centuries" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.2 (1998), 269-312. The complex figuring of amas at Bawit requires its own study.

the schematic and ideal monastic dress depicted in the apse of Room 6 represented monastic identity to men and women, monastic and secular society.

Indeed, the schematic and ideal forms of dress depicted here were likely understood as in dialogue with actual monastic dress in ways that would be legible to viewers of diverse backgrounds. Both modes belong to the traditional vestimentary system based in the ensemble of tunic and mantle. Monastic dress adapted the pre-monastic traditional scheme of ascetic philosophers, a form of dress that had been recognizable since the Cynics and Stoics and that continued throughout much of late antiquity. Philosopher's dress might comprise a single, simple tunic and/or mantle indicative of lack of interest and participation in worldly society and an elective display of poverty, yet point to a rich life of the mind and spirit.<sup>32</sup> Monastic adaptation of the philosophers' scheme accorded with a common understanding of Christian monasticism as a philosophical way of life.<sup>33</sup> In addition to staking this philosophical claim to outsider status, monastic dress was also predicated upon practices of uniform dress of late antiquity. Uniformity of clothing in late antiquity would not conform to the strict uniformity of today based as it is in expectations for industrial manufacture to precise specification in order to produce exact copies of garments. Late antique uniform dress accommodated a looser conception of uniformity based on the same types of garments that could vary in shades of color and in ornamentation – as in the alternating colors of the mantles of the apostles and monk-apostles in Room 6. And, uniformity of deportment was a crucial factor for the success of uniformity in late antique dress by further marking the wearer as a member of a given social group, who had acquired the clothes appropriate to their profession or station in life and had learned how

<sup>32</sup> Sarah E. Bassett, "The Late Antique Image of Menander," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 48 (2008), 201-225; and, R.R.R. Smith, "Late Roman Philosopher Portraits from Aphrodisias," *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990), 127-155. To the examples discussed in these articles, I would add late Ptolemaic-Hellenistic portrait sculptures of the so-called "philosopher's circle" on display through late antiquity near the Serapeum and the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Saqqara: J.-P. Lauer and C. Picard, *Les statues ptolémaïques du Sarapieion de Memphis* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955). The philosopher's long coat was also characteristic of his schema: Upson-Saia (2011), 70. Best known is Tertullian's Christian re-reading of the philosopher's mantle, "On the Pallium," translated by Rev. S. Thelwall, in Philip Schaff, ed., *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, Ante-Nicene Fathers 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1885), 6-22.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Upson-Saia, *Early Christian Dress*, 70.

to wear the clothes properly.<sup>34</sup> The uniform postures of apostles and monk apostles in both apse compositions are highlighted in the repeated placement of stripes and drapery folds, and in these mirroring stances is an expression of purposeful bodily control closely related to ascetic training and attention to the body.

The most visible components of the uniforms of high-ranking elites in late antique imperial and civic government were voluminous outer-garments, the cloak called the *chlamys* and the intricately wrapped *toga*, both worn with layered, tunics, elaborate belts, and special footwear.<sup>35</sup> Those garments and the ways they were worn had been designed to broadcast both personal wealth and social status. Christian ascetic dress, in contrast, announced renunciation of worldly concerns as a way of “putting on Christ” to wear Christ-like virtues (e.g., Colossians 3: 12-17).<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the schematic portrait of Jeremiah in Room 20 belongs to a

<sup>34</sup> As has long been studied by sociologists concerned with dress, the body, and distinction. A secular corollary to group portraits of monastic leaders may be found in the tetrarchic imperial chamber of the grand temple in Luxor where emperors and high-ranking officers are depicted in sub-groups by rank in which all share the same posture so that their tunics and cloaks hang from their bodies in exactly the same ways. See Ioli Kalavrezou Maxeiner, “The Imperial Chamber at Luxor,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975), 225-251; M. El-Saghir, J.-C. Colvin, M. Reddé and G. Wagner, *Le camp romain de Louqsor (avec une étude des graffites gréco-romain du temple d'Amon)* (Cairo, IFAO Publications, 1986. On the clothing and readily recognizable scheme of soldiers, see: Marie-Louise Nosche, ed., *Wearing the Cloak: Dressing the Soldier in Roman Times* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2012), esp. Michael Alexander Speidel, “Dressed for the Occasion. Clothes and Context in the Roman Army,” 1-12; and Annette Paetz gen. Schieck, “A Late Roman Painting of An Egyptian Officer and The Layers of Its Perception. On the Relation between Images and Textile Finds,” 85-108. For studies of uniform and distinctive dress of other late antique social groups, see note 35 below.

<sup>35</sup> These outward forms were referred to in late antiquity as the *schemata* of high-ranking officials. Their statue types also known by the names of their garments: *togati* and *chlamydati*; those in the guise of philosophers were known as *palliatii*. On these types of statues in late antiquity, see R.R.R. Smith “Late Antique Portraits in a Public Context: Honorific Statuary at Aphrodisias in Caria, A.D. 300-600,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 155-189. Helpful critical overviews of late antique dress are offered by Maria G. Parani (2007), 497-547; Liz James and Shawn Tougher, “Get Your Kit On! Some Issues in the Depiction of Clothing in Byzantium,” in Liza Cleland, Harlow, Mary and Llewellyn-Jones, Lloyd, eds., *The Clothed Body in the Ancient World* (Oxford and Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2005), 154-161.

<sup>36</sup> Sayings on the monastic imitation of Christ are ubiquitous. See, e.g., Paul of Tamma Saying ‘On Poverty,’ in Tim Vivian, *Words to Live By: Journeys in Ancient and Modern Egyptian Monasticism*, Cistercian Studies Series 207 (2005), 170: “Remember, then, that our Saviour came in poverty; he laid down the way for us so that we might follow in his footsteps and become imitators of him, as it is written: ‘Be imitators of me as I am of Christ’, and also [imitate] his other apostles.”

Christian ascetic dress code that was notably minimalist in its renunciation of secular marks of honor and prestige, yet foregrounded Christian virtues. This was a kind of anti-fashion. Scripture was also fundamental to the rhetoric of Christian, ascetic, and especially monastic dress. Old Testament prophets had inaugurated the, by late antiquity, venerable tradition of clothing for ascetic religious outsiders: a mantle of skin or hide, for example, and a belt of skin or rope. This scriptural legacy gave new meaning to the philosopher's garments adapted from Graeco-Roman tradition, providing the basis for a distinctively Christian dress, one that would reflect more precisely the moral character of the wearer.

The representation of Christian virtues through dress was a crucial aspect of the social context in which distinctively monastic forms of dress developed. Apa Jeremiah in Room 20 is characterized as a renunciant by his adamantly undistinguished tunic, mantle, belt, and sandals, however these are not garments that would have been worn only by monks. By the later fourth century, items of distinctive and exclusively monastic use included: the *melote*, a small mantle, of sheepskin or leather, that is, dead skin associated with, among other things, "the muzzling of passions" and poverty according to an Evagrian interpretation symbolic of monastic virtues; the hood, much like the hoods on childrens' tunics, associated with the virtue of humility, among others; and the *analabos* – crossed cords that marked the chest with a symbol of faith and kept cloth out of the way and the monk ready for manual work, physical labor. Not even Apa Pathermouthis, identified by inscription in the apse decoration from Room 20, who is credited in the *History of the Monks of Egypt* as "the first to devise the monastic habit," wears any of these items.<sup>37</sup> He, too, is portrayed in

<sup>37</sup> *Historia Monachorum* X.3-23 at 9: "A certain young man went to him, wishing to become his disciple. He dressed him at once in a sleeveless tunic, and having put a hood on his head, a sheepskin cloak on his shoulders, and a linen cloth round his waist, he introduced him to the ascetic life." The monastic forefathers in the roughly contemporaneous paintings from the monastery of Apa Bishoi at Sohag do wear items of exclusively monastic dress: see Elizabeth S. Bolman "The Red Monastery Conservation Project, 2004 Campaign: New Contributions to the Corpus of Late Antique Art," in: *Interactions: Artistic Interchange Between the Eastern and Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane, Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers 9 (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University) 260-281. It is possible that few exclusively monastic garments were worn at the semi-anchoritic/semi-coenobitic monasteries at Bawit and Sakkara as these items are very rarely represented among the late antique visual portraits or written descriptions for these sites. For the Evagrian symbolic interpretation of "the Egyptian habit," see the Prologue to his Treatise on the

the form of an apostle. The apse portraits do not dress the monastic saints in the actual monastic habit or place them in their own historical era because their goal was not documentary historicity. In fact, they defy earthly temporality and location.

*Reading the apse compositions*

The portraits of monks from Rooms 6 and 20 are not in prominent positions in the apse composition. They hold distinctly marginal positions. However, by means of their ideal typological dress the portraits deliberately locate these monks of an earlier, heroic age of asceticism within events from the more distant scriptural past, such as the ascension of Christ to heaven recounted, for example, in Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:9-12. As in the account in Acts, the image also looks forward to future, otherworldly events, such as the return of Christ and his final judgment and the salvation of the virtuous and, in Mark 16:14-19, the miracles to be worked by God through his apostles as confirmation of their message. As will be considered below, the monastic portraits contribute to compositions that are both nostalgic and proleptic expressions of monastic identity.

The main figure – by principles of centrality, greater height, and proportional dominance – is Christ in the upper zone; Mary and the child Christ hold the center of the lower zone. Accordingly, most art historical study to date has been concerned with understanding the place of these paintings within a category of apse composition centered on representations of Christ and Mary in apse decoration across the empire.<sup>38</sup> As a result, these apse compositions have been treated as evidence for pan-Mediterranean developments

Practical Life in Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetical Corpus*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 95-96.

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Michel Spieser, "The Representation of Christ in the Apses of Early Christian Churches," *Gesta* 37, 1 (1998) 63-73, at 71, note 7: "I will not raise the question whether the liturgy could have been celebrated in them. The decoration obviously is an imitation of the decoration of churches, so it is possible to use the evidence they give in our discussion." The liturgical associations of this visionary imagery have been discussed more fully by Iacobini, *Visioni Dipinti*, Rooms 6 and 20 at 60-65. Christa Ihm, *Die Programme der christlichen Apsismalerei vom 4. Jahrhundert bis zur Mitte des 8. Jahrhunderts*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992), devoted a section to the painted apses from Bawit at 198-205, Room 6 at 200, and Room 20 at 202: these cursory discussions treat the Egyptian material as supporting evidence for Ihm's systematic classification of early Christian apse themes.

both artistic and theological.<sup>39</sup> Jean-Michel Spieser in 1998 traced thematic emphases in representations centered on the presence of Christ as an approachable presence of God among men in the fourth and early fifth centuries.<sup>40</sup> For the fifth- and sixth-centuries, Spieser charted a growing emphasis on the divinity of Christ in a progression of compositions that located Christ increasingly higher up and farther away from the earthly zone of the viewer and further strengthened the divide between Christ and humankind by the heavenly enthronement of Christ or his placement within a mandorla – devices employed in rooms 6 and 20.<sup>41</sup> Spieser produced a useful, if perhaps unrealistically tidy chart of the development of iconographic and compositional variants, of which there are many at the monasteries of Apa Apollo and Apa Jeremiah, noting the appearance of the Mother of God, the Theotokos, in the mid-sixth century and the introduction of two-zoned apse compositions slightly later.<sup>42</sup> For Spieser: “The development was completed when the Lord of the prophets’ visions and the Theotokos, came to predominate.”<sup>43</sup> Spieser placed that final phase of this development at the turn of the eighth century shortly before the onset of the Iconoclastic Controversy within the Byzantine empire.<sup>44</sup>

To date, art historical discussion of the upper zone of these compositions has emphasized the relationship between the pictorial imagery and the language of Old and New Testament theophanies. The *trisagion* written in the open book held by Christ and the other motifs in the upper zone of the apse of Room 6 resonate strongly with the opening of Chapter 6 of the Book of Isaiah, in which the prophet sees the Lord enthroned in celestial majesty among the angels – the living creatures – who praise him by singing “holy,

<sup>39</sup> Spieser, “The Representation of Christ,” 63: “Here I will start with the assertion that, without denying the possibility of local or regional preferences, apse decoration all over the empire played its part in a general evolution, affecting representation and religion, that was uniform in both east and west, more or less until the end of the sixth century.” See also Brenk (2010) 86-88.

<sup>40</sup> Spieser, “The Representation of Christ,” 65-67.

<sup>41</sup> Spieser, “The Representation of Christ,” 70.

<sup>42</sup> Spieser, “The Representation of Christ,” 64.

<sup>43</sup> Spieser, “The Representation of Christ,” 71.

<sup>44</sup> Spieser, “The Representation of Christ,” 63: “The end of the predominance of this apsidal image in the Byzantine empire can be linked to other innovations in the imaging of Christ and his resurrection, beginning ca. 700.”



holy, holy.”<sup>45</sup> Similar visionary language is used throughout the first chapter of Ezekiel (1:1-16) with more extensive descriptions of the appearance of the living creatures. Two verses in the final book of the Revelation of John are usually cited for encapsulating the lengthier descriptions of the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah of living creatures around the throne of God singing the *trisagion*.

Revelation 4: 7. “...the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle 8. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to sing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

The pictorial imagery of theophanic visions at Bawit does not attempt to reproduce exactly the details of any of these verses, however it does allude to them as well as to post-Crucifixion appearances of Christ and his ascension in the Gospels and in the now canonical and apocryphal *Acts* of the Apostles. The imagery also reflects a wider range of allusions extending into ritual experience. By late antiquity, the *trisagion*, as presented in the open book held by Christ, was recited in ritual emulation of the celestial chorus during the celebration of the eucharist, and may have been incorporated into daily monastic prayers.<sup>46</sup> Recognizing the phrase,

<sup>45</sup> In the Year that King Uzzi’ah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. 2. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet; and with two he flew. 3. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6:1).

<sup>46</sup> Numerous sermons expounded upon various ranks of angels, including sermons known to have been read in Coptic monasteries, as in the “Encomium on the Four Bodiless Living Creatures Attributed to John Chrysostom,” translated by Craig S. Wansink in Leo Depuydt, ed., *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Corpus Christianorum Orientalium, Vol. 525, Scriptorum Coptici Tomus 44 (Louvain: Peeters, 1991), 27-57. On the *trisagion* in daily monastic prayers by the eleventh century in Byzantium: John Philip Thomas, Angela C. Hero and Giles Constable, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders’ Typika and Testaments*, volume 1, Dumbarton Oaks Translation Series XXXV (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 386-7; and Gregory W. Wolferson, *Daily Liturgical Prayer: Origins and Theology*, Liturgy, Worship and Society (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 172 and 176. More generally, see Daniel Sheerin, “Eucharistic Liturgy,” in Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (2010) 711-743, esp. 721-22, “Teaching the Eucharist,” and, in relation to these apses, Glenn Peers, “Vision and Community among Christians and Muslims: The

monastic and secular viewers would have understood it as a liturgical cue for their own mystical representation of the choirs of angels, that is, as a visual and literal cue for mimetic devotion.

The art historian Glenn Peers offered an insightful summary of the network of scriptural and liturgical associations, referring specifically to the painted niche from Room 6 in comparison to similar compositions from Bawit and Saqqara:

These compositions stress the synthetic quality of the theophany on the Mount of Olives by adding elements not described in Acts, but deriving from Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Revelation. Therefore the Ascension is not only referring to the charge made by Christ to his apostles on his return to heaven, but also prophetic visions of God of both Testaments. In an essential way, the Ascension was always understood, too, as the promise of the Second Coming... So the theophanic significance of the Ascension in Egyptian apse frescoes was always multiple: historical reference to Acts I, extra-historical in reference to other epiphanies folded into the Ascension in Christian interpretations, Eucharistic in the presence of Christ in the host prepared before the frescoes, and promissory in its anti-historical reference to the end of time and final judgments.<sup>47</sup>

Although Spieser and Peers did not mention the presence of local saints, their characterizations should ground how we understand these compositions within broader currents of the development of early Christian art, and should highlight the deliberateness with which the cosmic and local significance of the Egyptian compositions was formulated by the addition of local saints. Extending Peers' reading, the apas-as-apostles would stand in for all the generations of humankind who will be present at the Last Judgment. In merging the scriptural past with the ongoing present, several eras are telescoped into one transhistorical moment. The witnessing of the apostles – that is, their acts of seeing and of professing – allow them to present their visions of God as well as other visions attested in Scriptures, a tradition upheld by their followers, those who emulated them, including monastic fathers

Al-Muallaqa Lintel in its Eighth-Century Context," *Arte Medievale* 6 (2007), 25-46, at 39.

<sup>47</sup> Peers, "Vision and Community," 36-37.

like those portrayed here in the form of apostles. Moreover, viewing the image would become a framing mimetic act for the monastic viewers, who, clothed in their own schematic uniform, would see what the apostles saw.

De-emphasis of the monastic identities of the apas in the lower zone may have obscured their monastic witnessing as an element of this composite epiphany until the process of mimetic viewing is already underway. Certainly, the process would have been recursive – the monastic viewer looks at the apostles, who look back at the monk, who, like them, sees what they see; and the process is multi-stranded as the viewer remembers (or is actively engaged in) other mimetic acts. And viewing would have been an intimate experience because of the small scale of the paintings. (The apse from Room 6, which is more than twice the size of the apse from Room 20, measures only 170 cm or 5'5" across.)

These conceptually sophisticated compositions accommodate a number of readings. Central to this discussion is the formal acknowledgment through dress equivalencies of the commonality of the ascetic life for monks and apostles and the understanding that apostles were monastic precursors. Elizabeth Clark has demonstrated the enduring currency of a wide array of ascetic reading strategies, including figurative exegesis.<sup>48</sup> Along the same lines, typological figuration in hagiographical literature reflects a widespread practice by which saints were characterized as apostles, for example, or prophets because they practiced the virtues of those ancient exemplars.<sup>49</sup> Reading strategies were accompanied by the re-writing of scriptures as ascetic and the production of new ascetic scriptural texts, such as the numerous apocryphal acts of the apostles in which apostles were more emphatically cast as ascetic precursors to monks by the successes of their lives as teachers and wonderworkers, prophets and martyrs.<sup>50</sup> Within the broader milieu of such interpretive habits of thought, and in particular by the inclusion among the apostles of the long-faithful Matthias, who was elected from among the followers of Jesus as the twelfth apostle to replace Judas (Acts 1:23-26), the scene of the lower zone in the apse of Room 6 may be understood to point to the historical era after Christ's ascension, when numbers of his followers grew

<sup>48</sup> Elizabeth Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> As discussed throughout in Krueger, "Typological Figuration."

<sup>50</sup> Following precedents in Acts 1-2 and apocryphal acts in J.K. Elliot, *The Apocryphal New Testament. A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English translation based on M.R. James*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 229-533.

rapidly. Matthias and Apa Naberho stand next to each other as a visual proof of the spiritual alliance of martyrs and monastic heroes as successors of Christ's apostles.<sup>51</sup>

*Local saints in ideal dress*

The example of Apa Naberho provides one piece of written proof among many of the continuation of apostolic lives among the martyrs and the monks of Egypt.<sup>52</sup> The *Passion* of Naberho records how he was subjected to horrific episodes of torture over a long time and in several Egyptian locales during the Great Persecution of Maxentius and Diocletian.<sup>53</sup> Throughout he was watched over by angels and Christ, and saved many times to continue his life as an ascetic. Visitations by angels and Christ, who appears as a luminous man and ascends into the heavens, resonate with the visionary depiction in the upper zone of the apse, enlarging the range of clues that the long historical setting for the apse composition continues from the age of the apostles into the early fourth century age of the martyrs and after, just as Naberho lived on into the new age ushered

<sup>51</sup> Matthew, usually portrayed with a grey beard, stands next to Apa Paul; Mathias, with black hair and beard stands next to Apa Naberho. On "the movement of martyrs into monasteries," see Arietta Papaconstantinou, "The Cult of Saints: A Haven of Continuity in a Changing World?," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge and New York, 2007), 350-367. See also Gesa Schenke, "Creating Local History: Coptic Encomia Celebrating Past Events," in *Writing 'True Stories': Historians and Hagiographers in the Late Antique and Medieval Near East*, ed. Arietta Papaconstantinou in collaboration with Muriel Debié and Hugh Kennedy, *Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 21-30.

<sup>52</sup> Under the name Nabraha: Tito Orlandi, "Nabraha, Saint," *CoptEncyc*, 6, 1770, gives the saint's feast day as 8 Abib. Orlandi also notes that Nabraha's "Passion has survived only in the damaged Sahidic codex of the ninth century in the Egyptian Museum.... The writing of the text is very careless and it must be dated toward the end of the original Coptic hagiographic activity (eighth century). Moreover, it must have been conceived in a suburban area since it does not belong to any cycle and, as we said before, it has not been accepted in the Synaxarion." See below, notes 53-56.

<sup>53</sup> Henri Munier, "Un nouveau martyr copte, Saint Nabraha" in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français* 15 (1905), 227-259. W.E. Crum, "Bibliography: Christian Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 5 (1918), 201-215; at 206 providing alternate spellings Nabraha, Naberho, and Nephērōs (Greek). De Lacy O'Leary, "Bibliography (1923-1924): Christian Egypt," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 10 (1924), 324-330; at 327 citing the manuscript published by Munier, "The passion of Nabraha," as belonging to the group of manuscripts from the Monastery of Saint Michael in the Fayoum taken into collections of the Pierpont Morgan Library and the Egyptian Museum." Leo Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Oriental Series 2, *Corpus of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993).

in by the force of Constantine's imperial support of the Christian Church. Recitation of Naberho's *Passion* in the presence of his image, although perhaps only on his day of commemoration, would have underscored links between Naberho's martyrdom and asceticism in several ways. For example, Naberho's martyrdom is structured as a monastic life: at successive points in the narrative Naberho announces that he gives over his body to whatever might happen; he then renounces earthly riches; he is stripped of his clothing; re-clothed, and imprisoned, where, despite constant tests of torture, he does various good works, all the while maintaining and professing his faith. The story helpfully furnishes life lessons for ascetics, including successful examples of talking back to demons, the recitation of psalms for protection, and faithful persistence in the face of continuous suffering. Naberho's presence would have been particularly important for encouraging the monastic viewer to see the possibilities of his own equivalence to the apostles. Naberho's apostolic dress is appropriate for him in part because the healings and conversions worked through him during his incarceration and torture are like those worked through the apostles. In seeing the apostles, but especially in seeing Apa Naberho-as-apostle, the monk could begin to envision himself as an apostle. By this association with the monastic viewing audience, the figures of Naberho and Paul extend the temporal setting of the lower zone into the present day.

"Our father Apa Naberho," paired here with "the holy Apa Paul of Psilikous," a saint for whom I have been unable to find any other reference, however it seems likely that additional devotional and instructional cues for Apa Paul would have been added by the reading of his *vita*.<sup>54</sup> It seems likely as well that the pairing of the Apas Paul and Naberho is deliberate much as Naberho is also paired with Matthias, and the apostles are presented according to their common groupings in the New Testament (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark

<sup>54</sup> "Paul of Psilikous" is not listed in the Copto-Arabic Synaxarium; nor cited in De Lacy O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt* (London and New York: MacMillan, 1937). Arietta Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides. L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, (Paris: CNRS, 2001), 170-173 on saints by the name of Paul, on 172-3, notes a number of attestations to "holy" Pauls within monastic settings because they took the name of Paul "the first hermit," (2 Mechier, 27 January); a most interesting possibility for the identification of Apa Paul in Room 6 is Paul of Tamma, a famed ascetic of the mountain of Antinoe (7 Phaophi, 4 October), whose passion is quite similar to that of Naberho. Papaconstantinou does not cite the distinction "of Psilikous" in her discussion of monastic Pauls.

3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13). A clue to the deliberate pairing of the Apas Paul and Naberho may be found in another pair of figures at Bawit with similar names in Room 51 where they are portrayed as the sons of an equestrian saint.<sup>55</sup> Would local knowledge of another hagiographical pairing of Paul and Naberho further nuance recognition of this pair? Perhaps the most we can conclude now is that this second pairing should be taken as a warning against the exclusive identification or overly restrictive reading of the identity of any given figure. Certainly, these figures should be read as apostles, as revered monks, and as the particular monks Paul and Naberho.

Moreover, it seems possible that the very strategy of figuration by ideal dress is predicated on a fundamental openness to re-identification. If so, then the second “Makare” inscription in the niche painting in Room 20 need not refer to the Makarios distinguished as “of the monastery of Grnge” in the first inscription. Is it possible that “Makare” may refer to another (unfigured, unspecified, and potentially unlimited number of) apas known by the name of Makarios? Certainly, inscriptions and graffiti in Room 6 and other rooms repeat names many times, only sometimes distinguishing between referents. The name Naberho occurs in variant spellings without qualifiers in several prayers in the room.<sup>56</sup> Paul “of Psilikous” does not appear in any of the inscriptions although other Pauls are named.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> The similar Coptic name, Naphro paired with Paul was noted in an incomplete program including an apocryphal Nativity cycle. Jean Clédât, “Nouvelles Recherches,” 517-526. Bénazeth and Rutschowskaya, *Jean Clédât* (1999) 109-132.

<sup>56</sup> Maspero, “Fouilles,” 106, inscription 306, a prayer addressed to Naberho (NABRH0); inscription 307, an Apa Naberho asks to be remembered along with his “children” – was this the same Naberho known from Room 51?; and, perhaps, in inscription 302 on the same page, in which a Nahrau (NAHRAU) asks to be remembered along with Ahani (AHANI) and Ami... (AMI...). The readers of the inscriptions are addressed as well (as in Hall 2, inscription 27: Maspero, “Fouilles,” 54. Might this “Naberho” be associated as well with the “Nepheros” known from documentary records of the mid-fourth century as a mediator and healer?: Tim Vivian, “Holy Men and Businessmen: Monks as Intercessors in Fourth-Century Egypt,” in Vivian, *Words to Live By*, 323-31 and 353-65. In any event, variants on the name of Naberho seem to turn up fairly frequently in monastic contexts as one letter mentions two “Nepherotes” at a single monastery.

<sup>57</sup> A number of monastic saints were known by the name of Paul, however one candidate for the Paul who may be portrayed in Room 6 (if his identifying inscription is misunderstood) may be Paul of Tamma (usually identified as such in the inscriptions at Bawit), whose passion, at least in one version of his Life, is quite similar to that of Naberho: René-Georges Coquin, “Paul of Tamma, Saint,” *CoptEncyc*, vol. 6, 1923-1925. Paul of Tammah was also associated with Apa Apollo and his the monastery: see also Vivian, “Saint Paul of Tamma,” 142-3.

The function of Room 6 as a reception room is important because it reminds us that not all viewers were monks. Although pilgrims may not have participated in the same kind of personal identification, the image would have engaged their historical imaginations as well. Lay visitors came as pilgrims to see the holy monks of the monastery and to pray for assistance from monastic saints and other holy figures. On the feast days of saints, attention would turn to their exemplary lives, their potential as intercessors and, in special cases as in Room 6, to their images. The location of the small apse in the long side of the very long rectangular Room 6 would have restricted visual access to the entirety of the composition, and working in tandem with compositional strategies, would have directed attention away from Paul and Naberho, hindering their recognition as monastic saints by the uninitiated. Imagine the surprise when Naberho and Paul were revealed among the apostles! Yet, their presence would seem right and inevitable, given the parallels of their holy lives to the monastic way of life, and perhaps gradually recognized by frequent lay visitors (and new monks) as a pictorial convention of hiding monastic saints among crowds of apostles. Moreover, by typological habit of thought, visitors would have understood the holy lives of the apostles and monastic saints as prefigurations of the monks of the monastery.

Many of the inscribed prayers in Room 6 document the hopes of the lay-men, women and children who visited this room, who prayed on behalf of themselves, their loved ones, and their villages. Significantly, Naberho's story offered lessons for non-monastics as to how to approach the saint and for what, thanks to one of the saint's lengthy edifying speeches about making pleas to Christ in Naberho's name so that Christ in his heavenly kingdom would: grant their prayers; make their fields fertile; watch over their enterprises; not let them war against each other; or let any impure spirit rule over them all who took to heart the book of Naberho's martyrdom.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the local saints functioned as intercessors along with other saints represented in the apse and the monks of the monastery, who inscribed visitors' prayers and prayed on their behalf.

<sup>58</sup> Munier, "Un nouveau martyr copte," 256-7.

*Additional cues for mimetic viewing*

Characterizing monastic identity by reference to achieved sanctity through ideal typological dress is quite different from the open-ended potential for symbolic signification of schematic dress, especially in the fully developed monastic habit in which each item of dress could be associated with monastic virtues.<sup>59</sup> The meaningful effects of the idealized dress in the apse compositions of Rooms 6 and 20 compared to those of the schematic dress of Apa Jeremiah in Room 20 resided in viewers' responses to these different strategies of figuration as well as to activities and behaviors associated with these settings.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the closer similarity of Apa Jeremiah's garments to the garments worn by monastic viewers would have been nuanced by context. In the more private space of Room 20, viewing the portrait of Apa Jeremiah is more likely to have occurred during the repeated rituals of daily prayer, meditation, and lessons, as well as, perhaps, occasional consideration of the life of the saint.

The portrait was painted over a platform, presumably marking a place of honor reserved for a monk of superior status and authority, such as the senior monk living in these rooms, and visiting elders.<sup>61</sup> This would have been a place of honor analogous to that of high-ranking clergy below portraits of saints in a church sanctuary so that taking a position before this portrait would have been a performance of affiliation enhanced through dress and might have effected entrance into the protective sphere of the figure portrayed, or suggested mimetic performance of his actions – depending on circumstance and ritual actions – preaching, teaching, blessing. The placement of Apa Jeremiah on the wall nearer to the monks made it possible for a monk to come close – up to a point. Apa Jeremiah's larger size makes the illusion of shared pictorial and actual space more compelling than is possible for the figures in

<sup>59</sup> Monastic garments are associated with monastic virtues by Evagrius Ponticus: see Robert E. Sinkewicz, *Evagrius of Pontus. The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), at 91-2. This association between monastic garments and virtue is also considered in Krawiec, "'Garments of Salvation,'" esp. 139.

<sup>60</sup> "Apa Jeremiah" likely lacks both inscription and distinguishing features of identification by accident due to damages suffered by the painting over time. If this lack were a deliberate compositional strategy to accommodate multiple identifications, then according to post-iconoclastic Byzantine image theory the figure would be ineffective as an intercessor.

<sup>61</sup> This platform extends across the northern half of the east wall. Another "banquette" for the viewers/disciples extended along the west wall: Maspero, "Fouilles," 31.



the apse. His larger size is pronounced in comparison to the small, massed figures in the apse painting, and his placement high up on the wall and on a pedestal (echoing the actual dais below) renders his singularity more pronounced even as it locates him in a distant honorific position, likening his portrait to that of commemorative statues.<sup>62</sup>

A monk standing on the dais in Room 20 would have been seen in the proximity of both the painted apse and the ideal portraits figuring monastic saints as apostles, his presence and appearance compared to theirs. A comparison of Apa Jeremiah's schematic portrait and the ideal portraits in the apse, even in the old black-and-white photographs of the now-destroyed wall, show a fundamental contrast between Apa Jeremiah's dark tunic and the bright tunics of the apostles and apas-as-apostles, a color-coded distinction between the two approaches to figuration. The painted photograph usefully diagrams color schemes such as the golden yellow of the background for the figures in the upper zone against the greenish background behind the white-clad figures below.

With the subject of color, I return to Room 6 and to the stuff of monastic dress as representative of the body and soul of the monk. Liz James has demonstrated how color was understood to be key to the creation of form and to its perception.<sup>63</sup> Color also brought both material and spiritual associations to things, the people it qualified, and even to space.<sup>64</sup> The Christ child, like the risen Christ enthroned above, is clothed in incorruptible gold, unchanging and bright, and surrounded by a mandorla of divine light.<sup>65</sup> The green and white background below, as for the green and gold background in Room 20, would have been associated generally to lush green vegetation and bright white or golden light, with the specific

<sup>62</sup> Parallels abound in Roman visual culture: Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), esp. 92-107 on "statuesque imagery" and performances.

<sup>63</sup> Liz James, *Light and Colour in Byzantine Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and "Color and Meaning in Byzantium." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11,2 (2003) 223-233, e.g., at 226, citing Gregory of Nyssa, "If we contemplate a painting and try to understand it, at first it is simply a material surface which by way of different patches of color helps to fulfill the portrayal of a living reality. Yet what the beholder of the painting observes is what the color technique itself helps to fulfill: he does not confine himself to admiring colored masses on a surface, his perception moves only towards the form which the artist reveals by way of colors."

<sup>64</sup> James, "Colour and Meaning," at, e.g., 224.

<sup>65</sup> Dominic Janes, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); James, "Colour and Meaning," 227; Mathews, *The Clash of Gods*, 101-103.

connotation of heavenly paradise for the setting of the anachronistic assembly of saints.<sup>66</sup> In Room 6 the white tunics and bright pink and yellow mantles of the apostles and monks-as-apostles also establishes a relation between their natures. In this associative, allusive language, figuring Apas Paul and Naberho as apostles luminous in heaven reflects the types and degrees of their ascetic deeds impressed upon their souls.<sup>67</sup> Green links all figures in the lower zone together by one continuous silhouette, strengthening connections made by repetition of the apostles' clothing and posture. This strong visual definition of the group invites possible monastic readings of the other holy figures in the composition – angels, Christ, and Mary – as monastic exemplars.

Just as apostolic clothing could be seen as an ideal type of monastic clothing, so too could angelic clothing, as angels were widely known as ideal types of monks.<sup>68</sup> In the apse of Room 6, the pure, radiant white clothing of the angels, supplemented by mantles of the same pink color as those worn by some of the apostles, associates the angels with the apostles and monks depicted below. Although the colors worn at the monastery in the sixth and seventh centuries are not known, the traditional association of monks and angels was enacted by the white clothing worn by Apa Apollo's monks as described in the fifth-century *History of the Monks of Egypt*.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, inscribed prayers in Room 6, calling upon Michael and Gabriel as “the archangel Apa Michael” and

<sup>66</sup> James, *Light and Colour*, 46 and 105 associating green with earth, and plant life, at 74. For associations of green to heavenly paradise, as in funeral rites and funerary inscriptions, see Thomas, *Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture*, 51 and 53.

<sup>67</sup> This was not an exclusively monastic approach to dress. Clement of Alexandria, for example, offered many examples of clothing and ornament shaping character in his *Paedagogus* (as well how a person might impress his or her character upon their clothing and jewelry), as in Book Three, Chapter 11, “A Compendious View of the Christian Life” speaking specifically of white clothing: “so also clothing of this description shows the character of our habits. Temperance is pure and simple; since purity is a habit which ensures pure conduct unmixed with what is base. Simplicity is a habit which does away with superfluities.” Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, translated by William Wilson. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 2., Edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885), 113-346.

<sup>68</sup> And monks lived the angelic life: Karl Suso Frank, *Angelikos bios: begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum “englegleichen Leben” im frühen Mönchtum* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1964).

<sup>69</sup> *Historia Monachorum* VIII, at 19: “One could see them looking like a real army of angels, drawn up in perfect order, robed in white...” The author intended to enlighten readers about the monastic way of life - including the appearance -- of his subjects: Frank *The Memory of the Eyes*, e.g., at 69.

“Apa Gabriel” also suggest that at Bawit these angels were revered as ascetic leaders.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, the resemblance of the architecture of the cells at Bawit to tomb architecture has been noted since their discovery; more recently Hjalmar Torp interpreted this resemblance as a reminder of death for those monks who aspired to live the life of angels.<sup>71</sup> The specific form of the apse had angelic associations, and some of the inscribed prayers in Room 6 address unnamed angel(s) of the vault to intercede on behalf of the petitioners.<sup>72</sup> The latter raise questions about the openness of monastic identity similar to those raised by the inscriptions in Room 20. Do Gabriel and Michael represent the angel(s) of the vault as well as the broader category of angel inclusive of powers, thrones, and virtues? In any event, in cells and in public reception Room 6, prayers were understood to be channeled directly through the space of the apse, as through angelic – also understood in some way as monastic – intercessors depicted there. Angels were also exemplars to be imitated.<sup>73</sup> Imitation of Christ, the most exalted exemplar,

<sup>70</sup> Inscriptions 283 and 288. Maspero, “Fouilles,” 101-2.

<sup>71</sup> Torp, “Le monastère copte de Baouît,” 4-6. The architectural imitation was so successful that Jean Cleat, during the first season of excavation in 1904, identified these as funerary chapels and their numerous inscriptions as funerary stelae. Maspero, “Fouilles,” v, firmly rejected the necropolis hypothesis in the absence of burials.

<sup>72</sup> Maspero, “Fouilles,” 63-120, records the inscriptions from Room 6 (numbers 58 to 398). Nos. 59 and 60 painted near the apse address the angel of the vault (and “angel of the place,” as in no. 195). No. 59, at 63: “Lord, O angel of this vault, remember the brother Šoi, the father of the cell, and remember my brother Apa Čol also, that the Lord have mercy in their moment need; and remember Apa Jacob the eunuch, and remember the brother Onnophrius and the little Jeremiah ..... and remember the brother Phoibammon, the father of...” The same monks are named in inscription 60 (page 64) where they again ask the angel of the vault for protection along with the brothers Elias the painter, Paphnoutios the plasterer, and the brothers of the cell of winepressers, and little Phib and little Apollo, and man (secular?) from Tanemooye. (Several inscriptions were recorded for monks who identify themselves as inhabitants of the cell and one as the painter of the apse. Inscription, no. 58, overlapped by the insertion of the niche, names John as the painter.) On angels of vaults in other contexts, see Thomas, *Late Antique Egyptian Funerary Sculpture*, 18-19 and 52.

<sup>73</sup> Although the angelic life was a common characterization of the monastic way of life, monks would have received instruction on imitating their angelic (and other) exemplars, as along the following lines: “But you have said, “How can I liken myself to the angels?” I myself will tell you. For the angels are fiery flames, and you too are luminous in your works. You want the angels to be your friends: remain devoted to prayer and fasting constantly.... You want to be like the angels: listen, and I will tell you how. For the angels always gaze upon the face of God in heaven, and you too remain constant, with the eyes of your soul gazing upon him, so that your hands and feet are free from the traps of sin.” “Homily on St. Michael Archangel Attributed to

entailed the practice of Christian virtues, however “putting on Christ” is more clearly associated with outer form as it also meant putting on the habit in order to take up the monastic way of life.<sup>74</sup>

Internal compositional cues, such as the use of green linking all figures in the lower zones together by one continuous silhouette, place Mary within the group identity of the apostles as a special kind of monastic model. Although she is the lone female among males, she is majestic to them, enthroned and clothed in purple although she is not dressed in garments associated with rule: no jewels or crown, not the ceremonial cloaks worn by sixth-century queens, nor even the gleaming silk of kingly courts.<sup>75</sup> The matte surface of the cloth she wears indicates purple-dyed wool, which had a venerable history of interpretation as flesh and, more specifically, the weaving or, we might say nowadays, “knitting” of flesh.<sup>76</sup> In this conflation of purple wool and human flesh, color tempers the fabric and alludes to the flesh it represents, expressing Mary’s role in Christ’s incarnation and the relation of her substance to Christ’s human form.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the purple thread Mary was spinning at the time of the annunciation, which became the fabric of the veil she wove for the temple, itself became an image of Christ’s human flesh.<sup>78</sup> Christ’s incarnation, through which mankind gained

Saint John Chrysostom,” translated by David Brakke, in Depuydt, *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, 48-56, at 55-6.

<sup>74</sup> E.g., Krawiec, ““Garments of Slavation,”” 127, n. 6. This idea of “putting on Christ” by way of dress is discussed at length throughout Davis, “Fashioning a Divine Body,” albeit outside of the monastic setting.

<sup>75</sup> The color purple, through venerable tradition, maintained strong associations to royalty, in Mediterranean late antiquity, to the Roman emperor and, thus, to the idea of kingly rule. W.T. Avery, “The Adoratio Purpureae and the Importance of the Imperial Purple in the Fourth Century of the Christian Era,” *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 17 (1940), 66-80; Meyer Reinhold, *The History of Purple as a Status Symbol in Antiquity*, Collections Latomus, 116 (Brussels: Latomus, 1970).

<sup>76</sup> A longstanding tradition: Nicholas P. Conostas, “Proclus of Constantinople, the Theotokos, and the Loom of the Flesh.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3.2 (1995) 169-194; at 184 cites the loom as a symbol of life in the second-century *Oneirocriticon* of Artemidorus, and descriptions “of human tissue as finely-woven cloth” in technical medical texts, and in *On the Cave of Nymphs in the Odyssey* by the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry (232-305 CE).

<sup>77</sup> James, “Colour and Meaning,” 231: Athanasios commented on this special substance of purple wool, noting that wool is common and available to all, “however, when it is dipped in the dye of the sea, it is called purple. Once it takes up this name, it becomes something which is fitting to be used exclusively by kings ... [the purple] transcends the common character, because of the dignity of him who uses it.” James, “Colour and Meaning,” 223-233, 231 and note 39.

<sup>78</sup> Conostas, “Proclus of Constantinople,” 181 and 194.

the potential for sanctity and salvation, is here expressed compellingly through pictorial emphasis on the materiality of Mary's dress.

Mary's inclusion among monastic exemplars points to the possibility that the pictorial rhetoric of schematic dress presents Mary as an ideal for monastic emulation.<sup>79</sup> The plainness of her garments signaled her own ascetic character, which found written expression in hagiographic accounts, especially during the sixth and seventh centuries, in which she was cast not only as Theotokos, perpetual virgin, and companion to the apostles, but also as the leader of a community of virgins.<sup>80</sup> Viewers would have understood Mary's clothing to reflect her virtues, whether specifically of her extraordinary character or in the traditional rhetoric associating form and substance, virtue and adornment.<sup>81</sup>

The most significant cue for reading Mary in relation to a monastic life of virtue is founded in the imagery framing the apse, bust-length personifications of thirteen virtues, female as was traditional in ancient and late antique iconography, and adorned with necklaces and earrings. Whereas Mary holds the center of the lower zone within the apse, these personifications ornament the front of the outermost arch surrounding the apse, and enjoin the monastic viewer to practice their virtues. They are identified by inscriptions (from left to right): Mercy, Peace, Gentleness, Charity, Hope, Faith, Amma Sibylla, one whose inscription is illegible, Forgiveness, Virginity, Patience, Prudence/Wisdom, and Chastity.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>79</sup> The Monks may have been aware of exhortations like Paul of Tamma's to "Be like Mary," cited in Vivian, "Saint Paul of Tamma," 307-9. Mary appears often as a proper name, yet may not be addressed in prayers in Room 6 (inscription 245?) Maspero, "Fouilles," at 95. Christ is addressed in prayer (inscription 221): Maspero, "Fouilles," at 89.

<sup>80</sup> As in, e.g., "The Discourse of Theodosius" on Mary's dormition, in *Contributions to Biblical and Patristic Literature, Texts and Studies*. Vol. IV, No. 2: *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels*, texts and translations by Forbes Robinson with an appendix by J. Armitage Robinson (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004; orig. Cambridge, 1896). A faint echo of this tradition is apparent in "The Sahidic Coptic *Homily on the Dormition* Attributed to Evodius of Rome," Appendix E, 397-407, esp at 405, in Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>81</sup> On links between ornament, dress, and virtue, see, e.g., Davis, "Fashioning a Divine Body," esp at 358; Krawiec, "Garments of Salvation," 147-8.

<sup>82</sup> Following Maspero, "Fouilles," 146, noting that Ama Sibylla appears in the same location, at the apex of the outer arch surrounding an apse, in Chapel III. Tim Vivian, "Ama Sibylla of Saqqara: Prioress or Prophet, Monastic or Mythological Being?," Appendix in *Words to Live By*, 377-393, discussion of Chapel III at 381-2. See also Tim Vivian, "Monks, Middle Egypt, and Metanoia," at 216.

An easy linkage of one personification for each apostle and one for the central figures of Christ and the Theotokos is undermined by the additions of Paul and Naberho. And, where we might expect a particularly close association of the virtue of Virginité to Mary, instead the personified virtue placed directly above Mary at the apex of the arch is labeled Ama Sibylla. If, following the interpretation of Tim Vivian, one important aspect of the complex figure of Ama Sibylla is to be understood as the Virtue of the Spirit, then the apse as a place of the appearance of the Holy Spirit is personified and adorned by Sibylla, symbolized by Mary as the vessel of the incarnation, by Christ incarnate below, and above by Christ resurrected.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, Vivian's reading of Sibylla as the "Mother of Virtues" as monastic suggests a pairing of Sibylla with Mary as the Mother of Jesus Christ and both, in their motherhood, as exemplars for monks, who lived ascetic lives so as to engender virtue and more virtuous monks.<sup>84</sup> Spare ornamentation on the clothing of the apostles and apas not only foregrounds the uniform perfect bearing of their perfected resurrection bodies, which points to the potential of a virtuous life to render a monk more like his exemplars, but may also in some cases function as shorthand symbols of grace within: the dot (apas in Room 6; or cross Jeremiah in Room 20) at the chest perhaps marking the heart as a place of the indwelling of the holy spirit.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Ama Sibylla was often invoked at Bawit and Sakkara, along with Jeremiah and Enoch, Apollo and Phib. Vivian, "Monks, Metanoia, and Middle Egypt," at 55, and "Ama Sibylla," 377-393. Vivian's reading of the virtues as monastic may support this reading of Mary as a monastic exemplar. This compositional compression of imagery of the working of the Holy Spirit resonates interestingly with the notion of convergence in early Christian apses argued by Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999, revised and expanded edition) 142-176.

<sup>84</sup> Vivian, "Ama Sibylla," 382: "Saint Gregory of Nyssa spoke of monks giving birth to the virtues: 'In reality it is possible for everyone to become a mother in this regard'. The monks at Bawit may have seen Sibylla as the 'Mother of Virtues', and possibly as their spiritual mother and patron of the cultivation of the virtues. As R. G. Coquin observed, the Virtues were not for the monks 'simple personifications like those of the Hellenistic world or, more ancient, those of pharaonic Egypt, but rather constituted a particular order among the angelic hierarchies'. These Virtues were, quite literally, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they continued to be important in the Coptic Church."

<sup>85</sup> Davis, "Fashioning a Divine Body," 357, esp. note 2, without citing specific bodily locations. On the heart as the place of the indwelling of the spirit, see J.A. McGuckin, "The Prayer of the Heart in Patristic and Early Byzantine Tradition," in *Prayer & Spirituality in the Early Church*, vol. 2, eds. P. Allen, W. Mayer, and L. Cross (Queensland: Australian Catholic University. Centre for Early Christian Studies, 1999) 69-108; and Han J.W. Drijvers, "The Saint as Symbol: Conceptions

In short, my exploratory reading of figuration by dress in these portraits aligns fairly closely with Rebecca Krawiec's understanding of textual representations of monastic identity through the habit: "What seems at first glance a stable marker, an off-hand reference to the proper attire associated with renunciation, shifts as these writers" – here I insert iconographers – "stress different aspects of identity: alienation from the world, angelic status, widowhood, bride of Christ," – insert apostle, prophet, Christ, and Mary – "and, above all an inner person."<sup>86</sup> In several respects, this study is an extended response to Elizabeth Bolman's path-breaking interpretation of personifications of "angelic virtues" from the Monastery of Apa Jeremiah at Sakkara as spurs to devotional mimetic viewing.<sup>87</sup> However, our interpretive approaches in no way exhaust the potential for meaning in these compositions in which ideal portraits and other motifs were formulated so as to sustain extended meditations upon repeated viewings. Dress was but one of the strategies for forging links between the represented and the viewer, one that merits further attention, especially in teaching about the habit, which began with a monastic father's vesting of a new monk, his spiritual son. From the moment of that outward transformation of their appearance, monks were deeply attuned to their new lives in new schemes for the sake of their salvation.

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<sup>86</sup> Krawiec, "Garments of Salvation," 149-150. See also Davis, "Fashioning a Divine Body," 359-360, on clothing with Christian motifs: "Here, the visual marking of clothing may be seen as a way of "playing" with one's bodily condition as a means of "realizing" a particular kind of ritualized body."

<sup>87</sup> Elizabeth Bolman, "Mimesis, Metamorphosis and Representation in Coptic Monastic Cells," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 35 (1998) 65-77.

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*Illustrations*

- Figure 1.* Plan of the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, highlighting complexes with Rooms 6 and 20. Illustrations after Jean Maspéro, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouit, Notes mises en ordre et éditées par Etienne Drioton*, Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, *Memoires*, vol. 59, 1 (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1931) unless otherwise noted.
- Figure 2.* Plans of complexes with rooms 6 and 20, highlighting Rooms 6 and 20.
- Figure 3.* Photograph of eastern wall of Room 20.
- Figure 4.* Detail of “Apa Jeremiah” in Room 20.
- Figure 5.* Watercolor reproduction from excavation report of apse in eastern wall of Room 20.
- Figure 6.* Photograph of apse from, Room 20, Coptic Museum, inv. no. 8012. Photograph by author.
- Figure 7.* Photograph of apse from Room 6, Coptic Museum, inv. no. 7118. Photograph courtesy of Elizabeth Bolman. © American Research Center in Egypt.
- Figure 8.* Watercolor reproduction from excavation report of apse in eastern wall of Room 6.
- Figure 9.* Detailed photographs of apostles with A) “Our Father Apa Naberho” and B) “The Holy Apa Paul of Psilikous” in the apse from Room 6.



Figure 1

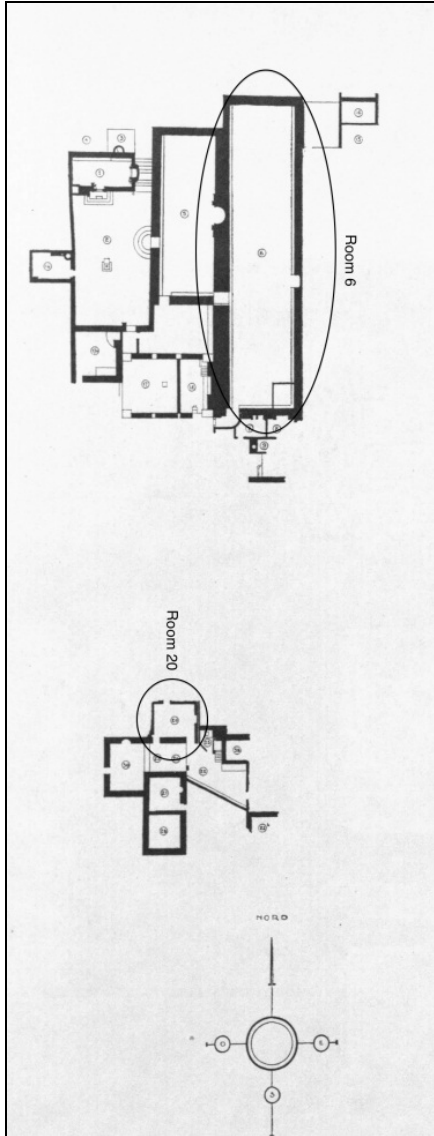


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



*Figure 6*





Figure 7



*Figure 8*



Figure 9A



Figure 9B