

CIPRIANO, Guiseppina, *El-Bagawat: Un cimiterio paleocristiano nell'alto Egitto*, «Pontificia Accademia Cultorum Martyrium, Ricerche di Archeologia e Antichità Cristiane» 3 (Todi: Tau Editrice, 2008), 370 pp. ISBN: 978-88-6244-022-6

This volume is the third in a much-needed series concentrating on the oft overlooked field of Christian Archaeology. What is particularly exciting is the fact that several major sites are being re-evaluated in the light of current advances in scholarship; particularly overdue is the series editor, Fabrizio Bisconti's forthcoming volume on the Baptistery at Dura-Europos. Much has been written on this monument but it has been in need of a serious archaeological re-appraisal for over half a century now.

Giuseppina Cipriano's work on the Paleo-Christian cemetery of El-Bagawat forms an excellent companion piece in the same vein; she makes clear from the start that her aim is to synthesise the information gathered since the eighteenth century by a variety of different travellers, archaeologists and other academics and, with her own fieldwork, to provide the first holistic analysis of the site. In the first section she succinctly sets out her reasons for re-visiting the subject, and they are reasons that find resonance with most of us in this field; whereas the cemetery has been visited and recorded, with various levels of accuracy and completeness, over several centuries, nobody has yet studied the site as a complete entity. Art Historians have analysed the iconography of the two major mausolea (the Mausoleum of the Exodus and the Mausoleum of Peace), others have explored the architecture or the evidence of funerary practices, but this study is the first to embrace all these elements and seek to explore the evolution of the cemetery in its entirety. It also places the complex firmly in context as a major contribution to our knowledge of Coptic material culture and the evolution of early Christian burial rites.

In order to achieve this Cipriano divides her book into two distinct parts. The first is concerned with establishing the topography of the region and exploring the evolution of the cemetery. She explains the different periods of growth at the site and the accompanying forms of funerary architecture that rose and fell in popularity as ritual practice evolved and changed both locally, and in a wider Christian context. To clarify this Cipriano places the evolution in three phases:

Period I: Origins of the cemetery (C3rd-C4th)

Period II: Development and expansion (subdivided by Cipriano into II.1. and II.2 this period covers the C4th and extends possibly into the beginning of the C5th)

Period III: Last expansion (up until the C7th)

In each period she accompanies her findings with a table listing each individual funerary structure's number, type (according the classifications defined earlier in part one), location within the cemetery, decorations to the façade, other architectural elements and observations, paintings and the presence of crosses. In this way scholars can quantify at a glance the frequency of architectural and decorative elements and use this information to draw conclusions about the usage and development of the site. Various building phases and changes in the frequency of usage/expansion are highlighted in the three fold-out maps included in the back cover of the volume.

The second part of the book concentrates on the pictorial evidence. Naturally this begins with an evaluation of the importance of the Mausoleum of the Exodus as an early example of complex Paleo-Christian iconography. This is followed by chapters on the relationship of the art of mausoleum 25 to the Alexandrian artistic tradition and how the scenes in the Mausoleum of Peace anticipate the evolution of Byzantine figurative art. The fourth and final chapter in the second part summarizes all the paintings found in the other monuments at the site under four headings:

1. Scenes of vines
2. The so-called Mausoleum of the Erotes
3. Crosses
4. Painted inscriptions

In each case the paintings are described in technical and iconographic terms, the current state of scholarship regarding these monuments is reviewed and Cipriano seeks to situate each scheme within the framework of Christian art historical practice by exploring comparative examples of related iconography from a range of locations as diverse as the Adriatic region and Rome, as well as including data from elsewhere in Egypt.

These two elements of the study are reconciled in a brief concluding chapter, which begins with a succinct argument for the importance of the site:

“Il cimiterio di el-Bagawat si distingue nel contesto generale dell'archeologia paleocristiana d'Egitto in ragione di una sostanziale alterità rispetto a quella

dimensione monastica con cui, troppo spesso, il paleocristianesimo egiziano e l'arte copta hanno finito per essere identificati. Il recupero di questa specificità funeraria costituisce un punto di partenza imprescindibile per la migliore messa a fuoco degli aspetti connessi alla cristianizzazione dello spazio urbano e dei suoi riflessi in ambito funerario, dinamiche che solo imperfettamente possono ricondursi entro le definizioni correnti di continuità/discontinuità.”

The rationale behind this series of *Ricerche di Archeologia e Antichità Cristiane* is excellent and it promises to be a series of major importance to scholars working on all aspects of the material culture of early Christianity. This volume fits well within this framework, but also stands alone as an important contribution to our knowledge of Paleo-Christian funerary practices and their accompanying monuments and paintings. It provides an invaluable point of departure for all those working in related areas, whether they concentrate on Coptic material or use the book as a comparative study for research on funerary sites further afield. The author and the Pontificia Accademia Cultorum Martyrum are both to be congratulated on a significant new resource in the field of Paleo-Christian Art and Archaeology.

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CORRIENTE, Federico; Ángeles VICENTE, *Manual de dialectología árabe*, «Serie de Estudios Árabes e Islámicos. Subserie de Dialectología Árabe» (Zaragoza: Instituto de Estudios Islámicos y del Oriente Próximo, 2008), 530 pp. isbn: 978-84-95736-07-9

El estudio de la dialectología árabe ha experimentado en España notables avances en los últimos años. Por un lado, es materia de carácter troncal en los planes de estudio vigentes en la Universidad española conducentes al título de licenciado en Filología Árabe, lo que supone ya una suerte de revolución, pues en el pasado no se había dado carácter regular y sistemático a este campo de la lingüística árabe\*. Y, por otro lado, más importante si cabe, se han publicado una

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\* Es de lamentar, sin embargo, que en el proceso de reforma de los planes de estudios de la actual licenciatura en Filología Árabe, que será transformada en Grado de Estudios Árabes e Islámicos, y acaso en otras denominaciones, no está previsto que dicha asignatura continúe impartándose, al menos con el carácter troncal que tenía hasta ahora. Ello supone, a mi juicio, un paso atrás, al