

Editor's Note

The current issue of the *Journal of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies* is a double volume, combining volumes 3 and 4 in one cover. It contains eight articles derived from presentations at the Third Annual Coptic Studies Symposium, held at the University of Toronto on 29 May 2010, and the Fourth Annual Coptic Studies Symposium, held at the University of Ottawa on 26 February 2011, including studies by the keynote lecturers of both symposia, Stephen Davis (Yale University) and Jacques van der Vliet (Leiden/Radboud University), respectively. The reason for publishing two volumes in one issue is that in this way we will make up for the earlier loss of a year so that from now on selected papers from symposia can be offered on the symposium of the following year.

After three successful symposia hosted at the University of Toronto (2008, 2009, 2010), the Fourth Symposium was the first to be held outside of Toronto, in Ottawa, thus fulfilling the Society's wishes to disseminate Coptic Studies in Canada also beyond its home base in Toronto. The organizers, May Telmissany and the present author, would like to acknowledge the financial and other assistance of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and the Department of Classics and Religious Studies (University of Ottawa), the Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt and St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church at Ottawa, as well as the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies, which contributed to the enormous success of the event. We would also like to thank Ramez Boutros, President of the Canadian Society for Coptic Studies, His Excellency Wael Aboulmagd, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, and Antoni Lewkowicz, Dean of the Faculty of Arts (University of Ottawa), for their kind opening speeches and presence, and Sabrina Higgins for invaluable help in the practical arrangements for this symposium.

For the present volume, an International Advisory Board was created (the names of the members can be found on p. 2) in order to serve the Editorial Board with advise on potential contributions and ensure the high scholarly standard of our journal. As of *JCSCS* 3–4, our journal has also become a peer-reviewed journal, since all contributions have been refereed by outside readers. The volume contains eight contributions, four of which are reworked versions of presentations at the Third Symposium (Davis, Dawood, Moussa, Youssef) and four go back to papers at the Fourth Symposium (Van der Vliet, Pettipiece, De Bruyn, Higgins). In what follows, I will briefly discuss their contents.

In the opening contribution, Stephen J. Davis, executive director of the Yale Monastic Archaeology Project, presents the results of recent excavations at two monastic sites in Egypt, the Monastery of St. John the Little in the Wadi Natrun (Lower Egypt) and the White Monastery at Sohag (Upper Egypt). The "life" in the title of this contribution refers to the Project's excavations of monastic residences (and their rubbish heaps) at the Monastery of John the Little, providing us with a detailed insight into daily life of the monks living at this site into the tenth century, while the "death" in the title refers to the recent sensational discovery of the burial chapel of Shenoute of Atripe himself. The author places these new findings into a wider perspective by discussing their implications for Late Antique and later Egyptian monasticism.

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In the second article, Jacques van der Vliet presents another important, large-scale project in Coptic Studies, the re-edition of the more than 70 papyri in the archive of Pesynthios that he is currently preparing with Florence Calament of the Musée du Louvre. The letters addressed to Pesynthios, bishop of Coptos from ca. 599 to 632, have thus far remained underexplored but have the advantage that they can be studied together with the hagiographical works on this bishop and other documents from Western Thebes, especially the ones from the Monastery of Epiphanius. As Van der Vliet illustrates with several examples, these sources provide detailed information about the social networks in early seventh-century Thebes of which Pesynthios formed part. Thus he demonstrates the potential of the archive for a better understanding of a crucial phase in the history of the Coptic Church.

The third article, by Timothy Pettipiece, discusses the complex relationships between the works in the Nag Hammadi library and Manichaean literature. Interconnections between both bodies of literature have long been assumed, but the specifics remain unclear. This article offers some examples of points of contact, in particular of influence from the Manichaean side. The next two contributions concern the cult of the Virgin Mary in Egypt. In the fourth article, Theodore de Bruyn discusses amulets with appeals to Mary or her intercession, among the earliest such evidence from Egypt, and explores how they can be perceived as expressions of “lived religion.” The fifth article, by Sabrina Higgins, reviews the scholarship on the iconographic relationship between Isis and *Maria lactans* and questions the idea that this relationship can be taken as evidence for cultic continuity between both holy women.

The last three contributions discuss more modern aspects of the Coptic Church. In the first of these, Bishoy Dawood traces the history of the Coptic calendar back from its origins in the Ancient Egyptian calendars to its current form in order to address the question whether the Coptic calendar should be updated with respect to the Gregorian calendar. The seventh article, by Helene Moussa, focuses on an icon of St. Mena in St. Mark's Coptic Museum in Scarborough that dates to the Ottoman period. Moussa discusses its iconography and date, and considers whether its features may reveal a subtle socio-political statement. Finally, in the eighth article, Joseph Youssef looks at Coptic monastic initiation practices from an anthropological perspective. He argues that Van Gennep's tripartite division of rituals can be applied to the initiation of Coptic monks and raises some important questions for future avenues of research.

As this summary illustrates, *JCSCS* 3–4 offers once again a diverse and high quality volume that we hope will stimulate further research in Coptic Studies and will be disseminated widely both nationally and internationally.

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Editor