

## **A selection of frescoes in the tombs of Bagwat region from the first to the sixth centuries AD**

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### **Abstract:**

Bagwat tombs are one of the oldest gatherings of Christian cemeteries in Egypt and a witness to an important transitional stage in the history of El Kharga Oasis in the Western Desert, which is the Roman period until the advent of Christianity and then considering it the official religion of the Roman Empire, of which Egypt was one of its provinces at that time and during that period an art differed in its essence and its artistic style from the classical art that was prevalent in the art scene at this time, and the walls of Bagwat tombs contains drawings expressing that artistic stage and its development.

This research, which is based on the field study and the descriptive analytical method, deals with the analysis of the technical characteristics of the frescoes in the Bagawat tombs and the most important factors that effected the production of murals from historical factors that led to the emergence of Coptic art and Byzantine art in Egypt and the distinctive characteristics of those arts and the characteristics of architecture in the Bagawat tombs and the most important distinctive architectural elements and the impact of the environment factor on the architecture of the Bagawat tombs and the characteristics of the frescoes by describing and analyzing the illustrated themes, the artistic style in which they were painted, the artists who implemented these murals, the most important results and recommendation of the study.

### **Keywords:**

Bagawat, Coptic art, Byzantine art, Early Christianity, Roman tombs

### **introduction**

Kharga Oasis is located in the southern part of the Western Desert. It is the southern oasis of the oases of the Western Desert. It is located adjacent to the city of Luxor at the same latitude and is about 200 km away from the Nile River to the west. It depends entirely on wells and springs for its water resources. One of the common mistakes about the oasis is considering it as a region. Bedouins or that its inhabitants are Bedouins, and this is an untrue statement, as the inhabitants mainly depend on agriculture for their food resources, which created an atmosphere of stability in the oasis that made it attract the Romans in the past, and the documents we have confirm that the Romans had entered the oases since the first century AD and settled. It has many Roman employees and provides the necessities of living, despite its distance from the seat of Roman rule, "Alexandria" at that time, about 836.3 km.

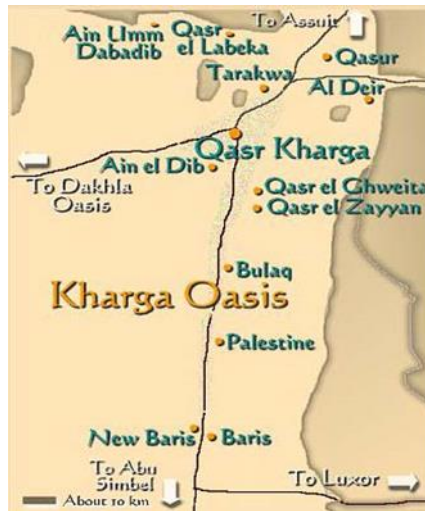


Figure (1) Illustrative map of Kharga Oasis

<https://www.selectegypt.com/egypt/kharga-oasis-maps.html>



Figure (2) Map of the location of Kharga Oasis in Egypt

[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-map-of-Egypt-showing-Kharga-Oasis-area\\_fig1\\_222511071](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-map-of-Egypt-showing-Kharga-Oasis-area_fig1_222511071)

### Research problem

What are the characteristics of the wall paintings in the tombs of the Bagwat area? What is the purpose of photographing it, the reasons for choosing the subjects, and the goal behind them? What are the circumstances under which these fees were implemented? What are the artists who photographed it? Did the drawings in all tombs have the same artistic characteristics and features? Was it implemented in the same period of time or was it implemented in different stages of time? How did the surrounding environment affect the artists' works in the Bagwat cemeteries?

### Research Importance

- The Baggawat region needs a modern documentary source due to the recent changes and discoveries that have occurred in the field of Coptic arts and the history of early Christian art.
- The importance of the Bagwat region as it has gone through important historical stages, the most important of which is the beginning of Christianity in Egypt.

-Deepening the artistic outlook and addressing the aesthetic values of the wall paintings in the cemeteries of the Bagwat area.

### **Force the search**

The drawings in the Bagwat tombs bear artistic features that express the various stages of development of Coptic art.

### **Research Aims**

-Discovering the artistic features of the drawings in the tombs of Al-Bajwat and analyzing the topics covered in the tombs.

-Deriving the symbolism of elements and themes and their significance in Coptic art.

### **Search Limits**

The research limitations of this study are divided into two parts:

#### **Time limit**

From the first century AD to the sixth century AD.

#### **Spatial limit**

The tombs of the Bagwat area in the Kharga Oasis, specifically the tombs that contain wall paintings, which are tombs (25, 30, 80, 210).

### **Research Methodology**

Historical, descriptive, analytical, comparative.

### **Practical framework**

The researcher analyzed the architectural characteristics and drawings in the Al-Bajwat tombs through what she observed in the field study.

### **Results**

The researcher reached several results, the most important of which are:

The drawings of the Tomb of Exodus bear the strength and depth of the subject matter. The artist relied on the symbolism of the subjects to express the essence of the Christian faith. The artist followed the spontaneous style in the artwork.

The drawings in the Peace Cemetery are considered a model of Byzantine art in Egypt, as they belong in their artistic style to Byzantine art. They were executed by the hand of a skilled artist, as the drawings bear the strength of the artistic style, the diversity of colors, and the good preparation of surfaces, which helped to preserve the drawings.

The drawings of the peacock with the four spherical triangles in the Al-Salam Cemetery, which is a funerary amulet symbolizing resurrection and immortality, indicate that the purpose of the drawing in the cemetery was a funerary purpose, in addition to the fact that the peacock was a favorite funerary amulet in the Bejawat cemeteries.

The drawings in Tomb 25 reflect design skills. The artist was influenced by ancient Egyptian art, especially in the mural of the middle dome in the inner hall.

The drawings in Cemetery 210 bear a Roman character, and we can trace them back to the early Christian periods, as they are devoid of any explicit connotations or elements that express Christianity. The drawings bear a funerary character, and amulets were used that express resurrection and immortality, represented by the phoenix and the peacock.

The drawings in the Bagwat tombs present the stages of development of Coptic art in its various stages, starting with the stage of borrowing from Roman, Hellenistic, and ancient Egyptian arts (the ceiling of tombs 25 and 210), then using Old Testament themes to symbolize the New Testament (the Tomb of Exodus), then after the proclamation of the Christian religion and expressing the New Testament themes freely. (Peace Cemetery).

## Recommendations

The most important recommendations recommended by the researcher:

- It is necessary to conduct more research on the history of the cemeteries of Al-Bajwat and on the scribbles and writings left on the walls of many cemeteries that date back to ancient times, as most of the writings are considered very important ancient texts that explain to us events that took place in the oasis and reflect the ideas and culture of the inhabitants in those eras.
- Directing the attention of researchers and archaeological explorers to the Kharga Oasis, as it is one of the ancient Coptic cities, which would lead to reaching historical facts about the Coptic period in Egypt.
- The necessity of subjecting the tombs of Al-Bajwat to restoration and salvage operations for the remaining tombs and the drawings in accordance with the scientific research published in this regard and under the supervision of Egyptian restorers who understand and are familiar with the nature of those tombs and the drawings.
- Establishing a special library of scientific literature, research, mission reports, and archaeological excavations that dealt with the Baghwat tombs in public libraries and in the museum in the city of Kharga to facilitate access to all references about the Bagwat tombs for researchers and those interested in arts and antiquities, and to preserve the history of this heritage.

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- ١٤٧ yaequba, tadrīs, tafsiir sifar danyal, silsilat tafsiir watamilat lilaba' walqudama'i, kanisat alshahid marjirjis, basburtinji.
- ١٤٨ yusif, majdi eayad, muejam allughat alqibti (erbii, qubtaa).