

## **LOUVRE MUSEUM**

The oldest evidence of Coptic objects entered at the Louvre Museum appears in the inventory of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, drawn up under Napoleon III and finished in 1857. Nevertheless, it is difficult to prepare an assessment of them, given that the inventory of the collections was not so precise as at present.

Between 1870 and 1895, under the curatorship of Eugène RÉVILLOUT, the museum gave special consideration to Coptic and demotic documents. During this period, numerous purchases of Coptic manuscripts, papyri, and ostraca took place. George Bénédict, curator of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities from 1895 to 1926, undertook a policy of fairly massive purchases in Egypt itself. From his missions he brought back to the Louvre objects of the Coptic period, purchased for the most part from antiquities dealers in Cairo. But it was the great excavations of the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth that truly provided the nucleus of the Coptic section of the Louvre Museum.

Beginning in 1897, Emile Guimet, a manufacturer in Lyons, charged Albert-Jean Gayet to ensure the direction of excavations on the site of [ANTINOOPOLIS](#) in Middle Egypt, which continued to 1910. They were subsidized in turn by the Guimet Museum, the Chamber of [Commerce](#) in Lyons, the Société du Palais du Costume, the Ministry of Public Education and Fine Arts, and finally the Société française des Fouilles archéologiques. [Quantities](#) of objects were then directly given to the Louvre, such as the “Antinoë veil” in 1906, but the largest part of the fruit of the excavations belonged to the Guimet Museum, founded in Lyons in 1879 and transferred to Paris in 1888. It was only in 1948 that the whole of the Egyptian collection, containing very important Roman and Coptic series, was made over to the Department of Egyptian Antiquities.

The ceding of half the product of the excavations of the monastery of BAWIT (Middle Egypt), which were undertaken from 1901 to 1905 under

the direction of Jean CLÉDAT and which were followed by a campaign directed by Jean MASPERO in 1913, endowed the Louvre with [architectural](#) pieces in stone and wood of the first importance. Moreover, it is thanks to this [donation](#) that it was possible in 1972 to effect a partial reconstruction of the south church of Bawit (sixth century) in a room in the Louvre.

Other sites yielded series of objects, always interesting although less numerous: Idfu, Elephantine, Medamud, Tud, Kellia. The resumption of the museum's excavations at Tud (Upper Egypt) in 1982 added a quantity of Coptic ceramics in a very good state of preservation. Gifts, of course, and, above all, purchases continue to be the most common method of acquisition.

It was in 1929 that a room called the Bawit Room was installed in the Flora Pavilion, bringing together objects from the Greco- Roman and Coptic periods. These collections were later accommodated in two rooms on the ground floor of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, while the small objects were presented in display cases on the first floor of the Egyptian gallery.

The transfer to the Coptic section of the room called the Serapeum made it possible in 1972 to offer the visitor a homogeneous complex of three rooms, illustrating the evolution and the characteristics of Coptic [art](#) from the fourth to the twelfth centuries through all the techniques (stone, wood, tapestry, bronzes, glassware, paintings, ceramics, manuscripts).

The major works were naturally displayed in these rooms; the Antinoë veil (fourth century), the horseman Horus (sandstone, fourth century), the shawl of Sabina (sixth century), the Dionysus conch (limestone, fourth century), Daphne (limestone, sixth century), Aphrodite Anadyomene (limestone, sixth century), the Virgin of the Annunciation (wood, fifth century), the paintings from Kellia (eighth century), the censer with the eagle (bronze, ninth century), the tapestry with the "Triumph of the

Cross" (ninth century), Christ and the abbot Menas of Bawit (painting, sixth- seventh century), and all the [architectural](#) elements deriving from Bawit, placed, where possible in their proper context.

Nevertheless, the objects on display are only a small part of a very much larger whole, preserved in the stores. The sculptures in stone, [architectural](#) or funerary (stelae), form a series of about 450 objects; a large number of them come from Bawit. The objects in wood, whether architectural or movable, number 564.

The most important part of the collection is formed by the fabrics and tapestries (between 3,000 and 4,000 pieces), which allow one to follow the evolution of this technique without a break from the fourth century to the twelfth.

There is a small series of about 200 pieces in ivory and bone.

The series of ceramics is far from negligible—about 250 pieces, to which are to be added 45 stamps in unbaked clay and an important collection of ostraca, impossible to evaluate at the present time.

A collection of objects in leather (footwear and sandals, a pannier adorned with an inscription in incised leather, a fragment of the cover of a codex, several pen cases) may be reckoned at about 200 pieces.

The objects in bronze and other metals (copper, silver) offer an interesting sampling of this technique, both through the quality of some objects (polycandilon, crosses, lamps, censers) and through the variety of the forms of vases (about 300 objects).

There is a small collection of about 120 pieces of glassware, the majority of which are small phials that probably served to contain unguents and perfumes.

An important collection of manuscripts (about 300 papyri, 420 parchments, and 10 wooden tablets) is composed, among other things, of fragments of Gospel books, works of Shenute, and magic texts.

Finally, the section possesses some [mural](#) paintings, of which 2 derive from Bawit and 4 from Kellia (Lower Egypt).

Holdings in the Louvre are inventoried below.

*Sculptures on stone.* 400 objects, including [architectural](#) pieces: friezes (172); capitals (3); broken pediments (2), (fragments: 8); statuary (20), (fr: 5). Other items such as vases (3); stelae (16).

*Sculptures on wood.* Architectural: friezes (18), (not complete: 7), (fr: 91); statuary (10), (nc: 5), (fr: 13); figurative reliefs (8), (nc: 5), (fr: 13); figurative reliefs (8), (nc: 8), (fr: 22); decorative reliefs (18), (nc: 8), (fr: 46). Other items: vases, pots, ornamental boxes, flasks, keys, combs, incised stamps (139), (nc: 108), (fr: 97).

*Ivories and bone.* Statuary (8); figurative reliefs (25); decorative reliefs (25); other items such as vases, pots, small boxes with and without decoration, weaving implements (220).

*Paintings.* Murals (2), (nc: 2); portraits (3), (nc: 1), (fr: 1); figures on wood (nc: 1), (fr: 5); decorative friezes (3), (nc: 2) (fr: 30).

*Decorated fabrics.* 3,000 objects, including outer garments (10), (nc: 2); bonnets and bags (10), (nc: 4), (fr: 4); undergarments (25), (nc: 20), (fr: 190); hangings (2), (nc: 8); cushion pillow covers (20), (nc: 15), (fr: 15); shawls (6), (nc: 3), (fr: 30).

*Ceramics.* 200 objects, including decorative vases (31), (nc: 9), (fr: 100); goblets (22), (nc: 5), (fr: 45); lamps (18), (fr: 2); [Saint Menas](#) phials (20); various items such as figurines, crosses, stamps, corks (7), (nc: 3), (fr: 1).

*Bronzes.* Crosses (10); inscribed crosses (2), censers (12), (nc: 3); braziers (2); candelabra (6); lamps (40), (nc: 12); [lamp](#) bases (7); plain vases (13), (nc: 2); decorated vases (4); ornamental finery (8).

*Leathers.* Shoes and sandals (15), (nc: 38), (fr: 95); boots (nc: 4), (fr: 3).

*Metals.* Silver (2), plus one censer; iron (12, including one lead ring [?]).

*Glass.* 120 objects, including vases (67), (nc: 27), (fr: 21); mirrors (4), (nc: 1), (fr: 4).

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