Between iconographic patterns and motifs from everyday life. The scene of an eye surgery performed by Saint Colluthos*

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Abstract: This paper presents the investigation of a scene on the second layer of paintings done around 800 in the Virgin Church of the Monastery of the Syrians (Deir al-Sourian) in the Scetis Desert or the Nitrian Desert (Wadi Al-Natrun). In it one can see Saint Colluthos performing a surgical operation on an eye. Also presented are writings dedicated to the saint and his cult and images of him. One can recognise influences of pagan traditions and Christian iconographic patterns and details of contemporary everyday life in the scene.

Key words: Scetis Desert, the Monastery of the Syrians, the Virgin Church, Saint Colluthos, Egypt, cult, representation, surgery, eye, ophthalmology

There have been many new discoveries in ancient monastic settlements in Egypt during recent decades. Such is the case with the Nitrian Desert (Wadi Al-Natrun), also known as the Sistus Desert, located southwest of the Nile Delta, between Alexandria and present-day Cairo. The frescoes found on the wall of the Virgin Church in the Monastery of the Syrians (Deir al-Sourian) occupy a significant place among them. The painting of the Annunciation was discovered first in 1991. Many studies have been written about it. Issues such as dating and iconography or the painters who created it have been examined. Opposing opinions have been put forward in the attempts to determine at least the approximate time of its creation. Since the frescoes previously found in Coptic churches, frequently left in situ without basic protection, were gradually obliterated, stylistic or iconographic comparisons were made with various, mostly Byzantine paintings. Therefore, researchers attributed the time of its creation to different periods, from the eighth to the twelfth century.1 The discovery of the fresco encouraged experts to continue their work in the church. It was carried out from 1995. During this research, changes and renovation could be observed on the building itself, and it was possible to distinguish its original appearance. Several layers of frescoes were found to exist beneath the last unpainted plaster layer. In addition, inscriptions in Coptic, Greek, Syrian or Arabic were discovered in the frescoes dating from different periods, and in some of them the years were recorded.2

Several architectural alterations were made on the church in the course of the centuries. Nevertheless, its basic spatial form has been preserved. It is a three-aisled basilica with a narthex. In the east it has an elaborate sanctuary with a semi-circular altar apse, called a haikal. In front of it is the space between the naos and the altar which occupies the width of all three aisles, the khurus, a choir which is distinctive for Coptic churches. It is vaulted and has a dome above the central part and a semi-dome at the northern and the southern end. The upper part of the western wall of the nave of the naos has also the form of a semi-dome (Fig. 1).3


2 Gormatić, Drevnějšie rospisi, 249 and plan on page 250; Innemée, Keynote address, 3, Fig. 3; idem, Dayr al-Suryān: new discoveries, in: Claremont Coptic encyclopedia, 29 January 2016, 1–2, in the

The date was ascertained when the monastery was founded and when the subsequent restoration works were periodically carried out on its church. Credence should be given to the outcomes of the latest research, based on available reliable sources that have been collected and to comparisons of the information they provide. Only a few important items of information from the early history of the institution will be briefly mentioned here. It was erected as a dependency of the nearby Monastery of Saint Bishoy. Numerous records in manuscripts in the monastery library testify to the presence of the Syrians from the first decade of the ninth century, especially of monks from Tikrit, today in Iraq, while the Virgin monastery of the Scetis Desert is recorded to have been in existence since the middle of the same century. The fresco inscription found in the church indicates that it was restored in 818/819 by several monks, probably the same ones recorded in the aforesaid manuscripts. Reliable written sources, therefore, speak of the Syrians residing in the monastery only from the beginning of the ninth century. The renowned and diligent abbot Moses of Nisibis played an important role in the decoration of the church and the design of the library. The Syriac inscriptions from the years 913/914 and 926/927, engraved at the door between the altar and the choir, testify to this. Between these works Moses was in Baghdad and spent almost five years in Mesopotamia, collecting Syriac manuscripts, and he returned to the monastery in the Scetis Desert in 931/932, with 250 books.4

On the basis of the available data, Karel Innemée has identified four phases in the architectural ensemble and the frescoes of the church and elaborated his conclusions with appropriate explanations. The church was certainly built during the time of the Patriarch of Alexandria Benjamin I (626–665) and soon had frescoes with modest decorative motifs and crosses painted in red and ochre. In the next undertaking, when the image which is the subject of this research was created, extensive painting works were carried out, mainly in the technique of encaustics, sometimes combined with tempera. The tall dado, imitating marble paneling and stone pillars along the whole church, the representations in the second zone on the pillars and on the walls of the choir and, apparently, of the aisles, as well as the scenes in the three semi-domes were done at that time. These works are assumed to have been done only a few decades after the completion of the frescoes’ first layer, on which there were almost no traces of dust or damage. The already mentioned fresco inscription in the Syrian language, found on the northern wall, on the second layer, mentions that in 818/819 a certain Mattay and Yakub ‘built and constructed this monastery’. Of course, they did not establish it, but restored and erected a defensive wall around it after the pilaging by the Berbers, which had taken place several years earlier. This means that the second layer of the frescoes was certainly painted before that year. The third layer of images was done in encaustic technique as well. On that occasion, the original frescoes and those in the higher registers were partially covered with plaster and the images today visible in the lower part of the dome and the upper zones of the walls of the choir were painted over them. Determining the time of the creation of these paintings based upon a comparison is equally elusive as in the previous case. However, the changes observed on the edifice and the preserved inscriptions provide a fairly reliable basis for the dating. The altar area was apparently completely restored and the wooden door with the upper beam with the inscription in the Syrian language mentioning the abbot Moses and the year 913/914 was placed between the choir and the sanctuary. In addition, the partly cleaned Coptic inscription along the dome above the choir, executed together with one of the scenes, mentions one Moses, the abbot and oikonemos. Presumably he should be identified as Moses of Nisibis. At the time when the frescoes of the third layer were painted, the windows on the eastern wall, which had been walled up after the building of the new sanctuary, were still there. That would mean that Moses had undertaken the painting first and then the rebuilding of the altar area and that the third layer of frescoes was created before 913, but probably not before 900. In the fourth phase the windows on the south side of the choir and naos were walled up as they had lost their purpose due to the erection of the high defensive monastery walls, and the interior of the church was completely repainted. Judging by the appearance of the paintings, this could have taken place at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Finally, the church was restored and its interior walls were covered with plaster placed over the old frescoes, which were hammered in order to make the new layer adhere more firmly. This was done around 1781, when the church was reconsecrated.5

5 Karel Innemée carefully examined different layers of the paintings and the time of their creation and presented all the available data, Innemée, Keynote address, 2–6, so one should accept his dating, which is also presented in the following studies: idem, Deir al-Surian: conservation work of Autumn 2000, Hugoye. Journal of Syriac Studies 4/2 2001 (2010) 263–265, 267–268; idem, Dayr al-Surian: new discoveries, 1–48. For the history of the monastery, Innemée, Van Rompay, La présence des Syriens, 181–193, specially 182, 192–193, where it is indicated that the presence of the Syrian monks can reliably be fol-
The scene in question belongs to the area of the choir and to the second phase of painting. On the frescoes of that layer one can notice various artistic approaches. These paintings were created after 700 and before 818/819, possibly around 800. The works of four masters, who were different in terms of expression and technique, were distinguished in the paintings of the choir, raising the question of why so many artists worked in a rather small area. Between two possible answers – that the church had to be decorated as quickly as possible so several painters were engaged, or that the frescoes were gradually painted over a lengthy span of time that may even have lasted an entire century – a reliable solution has not been found.

The paintings of the zone beneath the semi-domes and above the dado are important for this research. The figures of the saints are preserved on the pillars. On the eastern walls of the choir one can see two saints on horseback in the south arm and Saint James the Lesser and an unknown saint before the cross in the glory of light in the north part. Positioned on the southern wall of the south arm of the choir are a saint on horseback, Victor Strate- lates or Mercurius of Caesarea, in the east, a saint performing a surgical operation on an eye in the middle, and Saints Cosmas and Damian in the west. Represented on the northern wall of the north arm of the choir are Saints Cyrus (Apakir) and Pisentius the bishop of Koptos in the west, a holy patriarch, probably Damian of Alexandria, in the middle, and the holy apostles Luke and Barnabas in the east (Fig. 1).

The scene this paper is dealing with, set in the middle of the southern wall of the south arm of the choir, was heavily damaged and there are no traces left of an inscription. Besides, it was retouched after cleaning and conservation (Fig. 2). In the eastern part there is a saint with a halo, sitting on a decorated stool with a cushion. He has short grey hair and a round, thick, straight beard of medium length. The saint is clad in a dark red tunic and a light grey cloak and wears sandals. He is embracing a patient with his left arm and, with his right hand, directing towards the latter’s eye an instrument with a sharp tip and a handle with a cruciform top. Above, i.e. behind them, is a decorated wooden cupboard with a triangular gable topped with a cross. Its doors are open so one can see two shelves, both with three belly-shaped bottles with narrow necks, and between them are two groups consisting of four circular shapes, for which it is impossible to ascertain whether they are medicines, i.e. pastilles, or decorations.
The sick man is of smaller stature than the saint, and his posture as he approaches him is slightly bent. He has thick brown hair, a red garment and a light green cloak, and he is barefooted. In his left hand he holds a stick, a sign of visual impairment, while his right hand is extended towards the saint in a posture of addressing. One can make out the fragmentary traces of a figure, also of smaller stature, behind him, in the upper west corner. That person has thick, apparently short, brown hair. The upper part of the body is naked and the lower part is covered with a red cloth. The person perhaps had a small object in his right hand. The background of the scene is dark blue in the upper part and dark green in the lower one, and there is a very irregular field of bright blue around two smaller figures. The scene shows an eye operation being performed by a holy physician. One can accept the opinion of Karel Innemée that the holy doctor portrayed is, in all likelihood, Saint Colluthos, who was often invoked for help as an eye healer.

The cult and representation of Saint Colluthos have been discussed and concisely analysed by Maria Vassilaki. Her pioneering work, accompanied by extensive literature, is a solid basis for further study. The painting from the Church of the Monastery of the Syrians, showing an eye operation being performed by the saint, unidentified at the time, deserves special research which would include further examination about how he was venerated and portrayed. There are numerous reasons for this. As it has been said, Karel Innemée showed that the scene belongs to the fresco layer created at the time when the monastery was inhabited mostly by Coptic monks. Arietta Papaconstantinou published a comprehensive book in which the cults of the saints in Egypt from the Byzantine to the Abbasid epoch were analysed on the basis of inscriptions and notes in the Greek and Coptic languages, and appropriate attention was paid to Saint Colluthos. The writings dedicated to this saint have been diligently investigated during recent decades. The Encomium attributed to one Isaac, the bishop of Antinoe, was translated from Coptic and published by Stephen Thompson. Events described in a collection of the Miracles of Saint Colluthos in a book in Arabic produced around 1549 were presented by Ugo Zanetti. They were published in the original language and in translation into French and carefully examined, and those preserved in the Coptic manuscripts and fragments were singled out. The Encomium attributed to a certain Phoibamon, the bishop of Panopolis (Akhamim), was recently studied and presented, both in Arabic and an English translation, by Youhanna Nessim Youssef. This account was assumed to have been written in around the mid-sixth century, but he pointed out, relying on powerful arguments, that it was probably written after the Arab conquest, perhaps in the eighth or ninth century.

The Passiā, Encomia and Miracles of the saint preserved in the Sahidic Coptic language were critically reviewed and published, based on manuscripts and fragments from the ninth and tenth centuries, by Gusa

10 The description was given based on the literature and the available photographs. The photos were taken from different websites, as well as from the profile Deir al-Surian Conservation Project on the Facebook social networking service. Cordial thanks to Dr. Karel Innemée for the high-resolution photo of the scene.

11 Innemée did not intend to make an iconographic analysis of the paintings, so he described the scene, Innemée, *Keynote address*, 3, Fig. 8; idem, *Dayr al-Surayn: new discoveries*, 12–13, Fig. 11. In the first report, published much later, he presented the working hypothesis that a doctor treating a patient, perhaps Saint Luke, was presented, although he immediately warned that this assumption was very uncertain, idem, *The wall paintings of Deir al-Surian: new discoveries* (1999), Hugoye. Journal of Syriac Studies 2/2 1999 (2010) 167–207, specially 174–174 and ill. 8 (with a detailed description of the scene before retouching). That report speaks of the frescoes discovered in 1999, at a time when the research had not been completed of all the surfaces of the interior walls of the church (cf. idem, *Deir al-Surian: conservation work of Autumn 2000*, 259, 260, where the saint is also referred to as a doctor, for the illustrations of retouched painting, *ibid.*, ill. 1, 2). Gormatiuk mentions the scene as a representation of the holy physician Cyrus. He states that a composition, painted with many figures, depicts a healing with Saint Cyrus. He then says that Saint Cyrus, healer of eye diseases, was celebrated after his martyrdom in Alexandria and the translation of his relics to the town of Menouthis, Gormatiuk, *Drevneĭshie rospisi*, 251, 260 and schemes on pages 250 and 253. For the opinion that Saint Cyrus is represented here, cf. G. Vikan, *Early Byzantine pilgrimage art. Revised edition*, Washington, D.C. 2010, 74 and fig. 53. A. Papaconstantinou, *Les miracles arabes de saint Kolouthos* (Ms. St-Macaire, hagioeg 35), in: *Egyptus Christiana. Mélanges d’ hagiographie égyptienne et orientale dédiés à la mémoire du P. Paul Devo Bollandiste*, ed. U. Zanetti, E. Luccchesi, Cahiers d’ orientalisme 25 (Genève 2004) 43–109. Before Ugo Zanetti published the miracles of the saint, a book in the Arabic language came out of the press, but it has not been available to us. It is cited in the literature as *Le noble saint, Abba Kolouthos le médecin* the fact that Saint Cyrus. Sa vie, sa sainteté et ses miracles, edition revue par Anh Bûtisy, introduction par Anh Makari, Le Caire 1997 (Zanetti, *Les miracles, 43 and n. 1.*, respectively *Le noble saint, Apa Kolta le médecin*. Sa vie, son martyre et ses miracles, préface d’Anh Makari, évêque d’Al-Árî, imprimé par Dār Nūbār li-Al-Tîbāh 1997 [R. Boutros, *L’ hagiographie des saints thérapeutes: une source pour l’histoire religieuse des pèlerinages en Egypte*, in: *Études coptes 10. Douzième journée d’ études* (Lyon, 19–21 mai 2005), ed. A. Boudhors, C. Louis, Paris 2008, 233). The book encountered considerable criticism for oversights and changes in the text (in comparison with the one in the two manuscripts on the basis of which it was published) and for omissions of the parts viewed as unnecessary (*ibid.*, 233).


Schenke.\textsuperscript{17} The excavations in Antinoe, the centre of the cult of Saint Colluthos, were carried out by Peter Grossmann. His interpretations of various findings complete the picture of the practices that had been taking place there, as well as their development.\textsuperscript{18} In addition, a number of medical, primarily surgical instruments, found in Fustat, a part of modern Cairo founded as a military settlement in the year 641, were published earlier. It is not possible to determine precisely when they were made. Firstly, the assumption was that they were Byzantine, and later it was pointed out that they were produced during the late Umayyad or early Abbasid period, respectively at the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century.\textsuperscript{19} Finally, Maria Parani’s research dealing with the influences of so-called everyday life on the appearance of certain motifs in Byzantine art from the eleventh to fifteenth century has shown how much that field, still insufficiently studied, is important for understanding Eastern Christian artworks.\textsuperscript{20}

Saint Colluthos is usually celebrated in the Coptic Church on the 25\textsuperscript{th} day of the month of Pashon, which corresponds to May 20\textsuperscript{th} in the Byzantine calendar.\textsuperscript{21} Several writings were dedicated to him, of which two Passio, two Encomia and collections of Miracles have been preserved.

The first Passio was composed in the fourth or fifth century, and is presumed to have been written in Greek and then translated into the Coptic language. In the heading of the text it was noted that the holy martyr Colluthos was a physician and a healer. The account says that, in the twentieth year of the reign of the emperors Diocletian and Maximinian (sic!) and the third year of Constantine, Colluthos was brought before the court in Antinoe, before the governor Arianus, and describes in detail the conversation that took place in an unusually conciliatory tone between Arianus and Colluthos, who refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, and was eventually burned. There are no stories about the miracles of the saint.\textsuperscript{22} The second Passio was compiled later, sometime in the sixth century, without doubt in Coptic, but it is only partly preserved in the original language. The part about the conversation with Arianus presented in detail remains, but it breaks off before the description of the martyr’s death. According to this account, the suffering of the holy martyr Colluthos occurred in the twenty-first year of the reign of emperors Diocletian and Maximinian (sic!). Colluthos was brought to Arianus the governor of Thebaid and brought before the court in Hermopolis (Shmun). He refused to offer sacrifices to the idols so the governor ordered the soldiers to bring various instruments of torture and lay them before Colluthos to scare him, but the threats had no effect on the determination of the saint. Arianus asked him what he was by profession, and Colluthos answered that before this world he had been a doctor since his youth because God had given him the power of healing, and before God he was a Christian worshipping Jesus Christ his Lord. The governor ordered the saint to be tied to the rack and scraped and stabbed. However, when Colluthos was placed on it, he made the sign of the cross and the rack fell into two pieces, so Arianus called for another one to be set up. Unfortunately, the preserved part of the account ends there.\textsuperscript{23}

Two Encomia in honour of Saint Colluthos have been partly or completely preserved in the Coptic and the Arabic languages. The introductory parts of both writings note that they were compiled by certain bishops, who were not mentioned in other sources. In these texts, as in the note in the Coptic synaxarion, which will be discussed later, the development of the narrative on the saint continues and is enriched with new data.\textsuperscript{24} Four miracles are described at the end of both Encomia. They are different

\textsuperscript{17} G. Schenke, Das koptisch hagiographische Dossier des Hl. Kolluthos Arzt, Märtyrer und Wunderheiler, Louvain 2013. Gesa Schenke published the texts dedicated to Saint Colluthos on the basis of manuscripts and fragments made during the ninth and tenth centuries. They are located in many libraries and came from the White Monastery, while the manuscript, which is in very good condition and is now kept in the Morgan Library in New York, was found in the monastery of Saint Michael near Fayum.


\textsuperscript{21} W. E. Crum, Colluthos, the martyr and his name, BZ 30 (1929–1930) 325; U. Zanetti, Note textologique sur S. Colluthos, AB 144 (1996) 10, 11, 12; Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 125. Almost all researchers note that he was mentioned in some Coptic synaxaria on the 24\textsuperscript{th} day of the month of Pashon, i.e. on 19\textsuperscript{th} May. The cult of the saint did not spread far beyond Egypt. His memory, however, is recorded in the Synaxarium of the Church of Constantine (as the second for May 19\textsuperscript{th}) and is a very concise one, cf. Delehaye, Synaxarium, 695.34–42.

\textsuperscript{22} Four martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic codices, ed. E. A. E. Reymond, J. W. B. Barns, Oxford 1973, 25–29 (in Coptic), 145–150 (in English), published after the manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York M 591, made before 14\textsuperscript{th} February 861, brought from the monastery of Saint Michael near Fayum. It was pointed out that a part of the Passio containing some differences can be read in a fragment kept in Berlin (Berlin, Palimpsest P 9755) from the tenth century (ibid., 11, 20). Schenke recently published the text relating on both sources, Schenke, Das koptisch hagiographische Dos- sier, 40–59 (Morgan M 591), 80–81 (Palimpsest 9755), side by side in Sahidic Coptic (on the even pages) and German (on the odd pages) and accompanied it with an introduction and comments, ibid., 35–38, 58–78, 82–83. For the examples of the text observed until 1996 in the Coptic and Arabic manuscripts, Zanetti, Note textologique, 12–14, and after that year, in Arabic books, idem, Les miracles, 54. For that Passio, cf. Crum, Colluthos, 325–326; Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 125 (offers the dating of the text); Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollou- thos, 57; Zanetti, Les miracles, 54.

\textsuperscript{23} Four martyrdoms, 11–13, the English translation based on a partially preserved text in the manuscript at the National Library in Paris Ms. Paris. Copte 78, apparently from the ninth century, is stated in the Introduction of the book and the original in the Coptic language is ed- ited in the chapter Translations and notes, ibid., 141–143. That Passio was published later by Schenke (idem, Das koptisch hagiographische Dossier, 86–93, with an introduction and commentaries, ibid., 83–85, 94–103). For the examples of the text noticed until 1996 in one very damaged Coptic and one well-preserved Arabic book, Zanetti, Note textologique, 14–15, and after that year, in Arabic manuscripts, idem, Les miracles, 54. It seems that the Arabic translation has not been published yet. On that Passio, cf. Crum, Colluthos, 326; Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 125, 126 (gives the dating of the text); Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollou- thos, 57; Zanetti, Les miracles, 52–53. Coptic and Arabic names of the settlements often differ from those of ancient times, so the earlier and well-known names will be regularly cited in this study.

\textsuperscript{24} Cf. Four martyrdoms, 13–15.
and none of them are recounted in both scriptures. One Encomium is attributed to an Isaac, the bishop of Antinoe. It was delivered on the day of the saint's commemoration, and it certainly originated before 861, as in that year the oldest manuscript in which it is preserved was completed. It contains the miraculous events with which later collections of the miracles of the saint would begin. According to the text, Colluthos was from a reputable family in Antinoe. His father Heraklamon was a good governor and righteous judge. His mother Christiana, who came from a senator's family, was merciful and compassionate. They had a child in their old age. The boy studied diligently, and when he grew up he took care of the poor and of his elder-ly parents. Then the archangel Gabriel appeared to him, pledged him to celibacy and showed him future events. In Antinoe, Colluthos healed a man with a withered hand, who spread the word about his powers. His father wished to marry him to his sister's daughter, the beautiful Tadi-an, but Colluthos revealed that he had made a vow to remain celibate. The parents accepted his decision. Soon, they passed away, and he distributed most of his possessi-ons to the poor, freed the slaves and raised and support-ed three shelters for wayfarers and donated money each month to a place for the sick called Skēnon. He traveled to the city of Shmum (Hermopolis), where he healed a blind man who was out begging with his son. Then he stayed with the bishop Apa Pinoution for seven years. At that time, his best friend was the bishop's son, Philip, a deacon and a doctor, and he taught Colluthos the art of medicine. Colluthos was ordained a priest by the bishop. The Greek idolator Arianus was appointed after the death of the gov-ernor Kantitos. He then married the already mentioned daughter of Colluthos' aunt. Diocletian became emperor and commanded that idols be worshipped and all Chris-tians be killed. Arianus obeyed him, inflicting great bloodshed among the martyrs, and had Bishop Pinoution put to death. The governor forced the priest Colluthos to of-fer sacrifice, but he refused, so he was thrown into prison, where he spent three years. Finally, Arianus ordered the saint to be burned. The holy body of Colluthos was laid in a martyr's tomb built for him, and many miracles oc-curred beside the shrine. In the end, four of them were described. All of them took place in Antinoe, of course.25

25 This extensive Encomium of 111 chapters, based on the manuscript M 591 written before 14th February 861, was published by Steven Thompson, Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan library, 37– 64 (in English), for four miracles, ibid., 52–64 (chapters 61–108). Ste-phen Emmel and Kristin Hacken South presented the earlier editions and referred to three copies of the text — in addition to the mentioned one, two more fragments — the one in Vienna and the other one in the British Library, Or. 7558 (40), and edited the second one, S. Em-mel, K. H. South, Isaac of Antinoe Encomium on Colluthus for 24 Pa-sions (19 May). A newly identified Coptic witness (British Library Or. 7558[40] = Layton, Cat. BLC, No. 146), AB 144 (1996) 5–9, in Coptic and the English translation, ibid., 8–9. Schenke published the Encomi-um based on the two fragments, Schenke, Das koptisch hagiographische Dossier, 140–143 (from Vienna), 148–149 (from London), 40–59, while presenting the text in the manuscript Morgan M 591 according to Thompson's edition, ibid., 113–114, 138–139, 144–147, 150–151. Ugo Zanetti gave meticulous observations on possible interrelations of earlier and later manuscripts. He named the text the First Homily of Isaac, the Bishop of Antinoe, and assumed that the Second Homily of Isaac of Antinoe (for the Khoikoi 14th, i.e. December 10th or 11th), in honour of the discovery of the relics and erection of the Church of Saint Colluthos in Antinoe, which had not been published (on that, v. also, Emmel, South, Isaac of Antinoe Encomium, 5; Zanetti, Note textologique, 18), contained the miracles (idem, Les miracles, 44, 50, 52.

The other Encomium, whose writer introduced himself as Phoibamon, the bishop of Akhmim (Panopolis) and vicar of all of Egypt during the second exile of the patriarch of Alexandria Theodosius (537–567), was composed in hon-our of the consecration of the Church of Saint Colluthos in the village of Pneuit, northwest of Panopolis. It has been already said that it was believed to have been compiled around the middle of the sixth century, but then recently it was said to have probably been written after the Arab conquest, perhaps in the eighth or ninth century. There are numerous claims regarding ancient history that have no corroboration in written sources. The saint appears to the writer in a vision and foretells his fate. Only that part of the text will be briefly exposed here. Colluthos was the son of the great lord Heraklamon, the prince of all Egypt. The governor Arianus worshipped idols, however, he did not reveal that until Diocletian came to power. Colluthos spent time with the bishop Serapion, and healed all who came to him. Arianus married a notable local woman named Dadiana, for which Colluthos had to give his consent. A month after the wedding, Diocletian came to power and in the first ten years he did not require sacrifices to be made to idols. When Arianus assumed authority, he arrested the holy bishop Apa Abba Dion and had him decapitated. He ordered the burning of most of the priests in the city. Then, for ten years he proceeded to shed the blood of the innocent. However, he never requested Colluthos to offer sacrifice. When young Protonius was martyred, his uncle demanded to know why Arianus had punished the young man, and not Colluthos, who openly performed the Chris-tian sacraments. The governor brought Colluthos before the court and tried to force him to offer pagan sacrifices, which the latter refused. And so he was tied around the waist with three iron chains and hung from a tree under which a halfed mill stone was placed, of which one half was tied around his neck and the other to his legs, and he was left hanging for three hours and only then was re-leased. Colluthos was bleeding from his nose and mouth, and his servant Magi collected the blood and gave it to the sick, who were healed with it. Afterwards, Colluthos was thrown into prison in Shmun (Hermopolis). Collu-thos' sister vowed that she would not enter the marriage bed while her brother was in a dungeon, and animosity prevailed between her and Arianus for three years. Dur-ing the second year of his incarceration, Colluthos had a vision of the Savior in a luminous chariot, the Virgin, and thousands of thousands of angels and archangels. Then the Lord told him that in a village named Pneuit, which was likened to Sodom because of its adultery, one day a church to the glory of Colluthos would be erected, which would forever be guarded by a group of angels, as well as to order his servant Magi to bury him beside his father Heraklamon

53). For the earlier known three Coptic and four Arabic manuscripts containing the First Encomium (ibid., 15–18) and four more noted af-ter 1996, and for the inerrelations of various redactions, both in Copt-ic and in Arabic, idem, Les miracles, 54–55. The Second Encomium of Isaac of Antinoe was found in two Arabic manuscripts (idem, Note textologique, 18–19), and it seems it had been preserved in the one kept at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, number 175 (idem, Les miracles, 56). The first text is briefly mentioned in, Crum, Colluthos, 326; Papakonstantinou, Le culte des saints, 127; Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 57. Coptic homilies, unlike the Greek, often contain a lot of information on the saints, cf. Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan library, V–XVII (S. Ashbrook Harvey). In order to avoid a long title, the text will be referred to as the Encomium of Isaac of Antinoe further in the study.
on the mount of the city of Antinoe, where a church would be built in his honour by order of the God-loving Emperor Constantine, and that Father Phoibamon would erect a church dedicated to his pure name in Pneuit, that the Lord would secure glory for the church and that the miracles that would take place in it would be mentioned all over the earth. In the hope that his wife would reconcile with him if Colluthos was no longer alive, Arius sent a ruthless soldier to Shmun. He took Colluthos out of the prison and severed his neck from the back, so the blood spurted all around. Not without performing a ring of sulfur around his neck and wood on his hair, and he was burned alive, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Diocletian. Then Colluthos appeared to his servant Magi and told him how, according to the Savior's command, he was to bury him. Finally, the four miracles that occurred in the church of the saint in Pneuit are described.26

The Collections of Miracles, composed in Coptic or Arabic, carry various stories about numerous cures thanks to the therapeutic properties of the shrines dedicated to Saint Colluthos, primarily in Antinoe, and in rare cases, by means of the saint's appearance to patients outside the places of his cult.27

In the Coptic Arabic synaxarion there is a note mentioning that the commemoration of the death of the holy martyr Colluthos from Antinoe was on the 25th day of the month of Pashon, which corresponds to May 20th in the Byzantine calendar. He was the son of pious parents. He studied hard and was a keen reader of ecclesiastical writings. Since childhood he had been dedicated and devout and had spent a great deal of time in prayer. When he grew up, his father wanted him to marry, but he refused. His parents had a daughter, bestowed by God to them after their son. They married her to Arius. He assumed the governorship after his father-in-law. The latter, being old, requested the emperor to relieve him of his duties and he handed them over to his son-in-law Arius. When his parents died, Colluthos erected a shelter for wayfarers. He studied medicine, became a doctor and took care of the sick, free of charge. As the emperor Diocletian was an idolator, and Arius agreed with him, he began to torture Christians. In the desire for martyrdom, the saint went to the assembly and berated the emperor, his brother-in-law Arius and their idols. Because of his sister, the governor could do nothing but send him to El-Bahnasa (Oxyrhynthus), where he spent three years in prison, while she tried in vain to have him released. A new governor was appointed instead of Arius. He heard about the case of Colluthos, sent for him and threatened him, but the saint paid no heed to his threats. The governor was furious and ordered him to be tortured. Colluthos endured various torments, and each time the angel of the Lord came to comfort him and performed great miracles. The governor realised that he was helpless as the saint did not renounce his belief, so he ordered his head to be cut off. The people of Colluthos' city interred his body in a beautiful place, and it performed miracles and wonders.28

Finally, despite the fact that his cult did not take root in Byzantium, in the Synaxarion of the Church of Constantineople, a very concise note recollecting the suffering of the holy martyr Colluthos was recorded for the 19th day of the month of May, as the second in succession. He lived in the time of the Emperor Maximian and was from Thebaid in Egypt. Brought to the governor Arius in Hermopolis (ἐν Ἑρμουπόλει) he professed his belief in Christ. He did not succumb to flattery nor was he frightened by threats. Firstly, a huge stone was hung about his neck. Then he was sentenced to be punished by fire, and died when he was thrown into the blaze.29

of the miracles of St. Colluthos in the Coptic language did not stop growing and that some Arabic recensions bring fifteen miracles, such as the collection published by Ugo Zanetti, and that some of them described in Coptic manuscripts and only fragmentarily in Coptic ones) with certain texts written in honour of other saints and recognised them as its sources, ibid., 125–129. Prior to his research it was generally accepted that the writing originated in the middle of the sixth century, cf. ibid., 123–133, specially 130–131. Soon afterwards, Schenke published the parts of the text based on one fragment from Paris, B. N. 129.16, and two more from Vienna, K 9525 and 9526, and K 9524, Schenke, Das koptisch-hagiographische Dossier, 160–163 (from Paris), 172–179 (the first from Vienna), 186–189 (the second from Vienna), 40–59, with introductions and comments, ibid., 151–158, 164–170, 180–184, 190–191. Zanetti assumes, for many reasons, that there was also the First Encomium of Phoibamon, which has not yet been found, expressing the hope that it would increase the number of miracles attributed to the saint (Zanetti, Hagiographie des saints thérapeutes, 19–20, warning that the full Arabic text had not been published yet; idem, Les miracles, 44, 53). He published four miracles based on the Arabic translation, since they have been preserved only partially in the Coptic fragments, ibid., 48–50. He also pointed out that along with three fragmentary Coptic examples and an Arabic one, known by 1996, two more Arabic ones were noted, idem, Note textologique, 19–20, warning that the full Arabic text had not been published yet; idem, Les miracles, 56. The Encomium is also mentioned in, Crum, Colluthos, 326; Vasilii, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 57, 58. In order to avoid a long title, the text will be referred to further in the study as the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis.

26 This comprehensive text of 107 chapters was recently studied and published by Youhanna Nessim Youssuf, Nessim Youssuf, The second Encomium, 123–171. For the edition of the Encomium based on the manuscript the British Library Or. 7473 (while the other one, mentioned in earlier literature, could not be traced), ibid., 133–148 (in Arabic), 149–171 (English translation, for the miracles, ibid., 164–171). He noticed the similarity of the Encomium (preserved in Arabic manuscripts and only fragmentarily in Coptic ones) with certain texts written in honour of other saints and recognised them as its sources, ibid., 125–129. Prior to his research it was generally accepted that the writing originated in the middle of the sixth century, cf. ibid., 123–133, specially 130–131. Soon afterwards, Schenke published the parts of the text based on one fragment from Paris, B. N. 129.16, and two more from Vienna, K 9525 and 9526, and K 9524, Schenke, Das koptisch-hagiographische Dossier, 160–163 (from Paris), 172–179 (the first from Vienna), 186–189 (the second from Vienna), 40–59, with introductions and comments, ibid., 151–158, 164–170, 180–184, 190–191. Zanetti assumes, for many reasons, that there was also the First Encomium of Phoibamon, which has not yet been found, expressing the hope that it would increase the number of miracles attributed to the saint (Zanetti, Hagiographie des saints thérapeutes, 19–20, warning that the full Arabic text had not been published yet; idem, Les miracles, 44, 53). He published four miracles based on the Arabic translation, since they have been preserved only partially in the Coptic fragments, ibid., 48–50. He also pointed out that along with three fragmentary Coptic examples and an Arabic one, known by 1996, two more Arabic ones were noted, idem, Note textologique, 19–20, warning that the full Arabic text had not been published yet; idem, Les miracles, 56. The Encomium is also mentioned in, Crum, Colluthos, 326; Vasilii, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 57, 58. In order to avoid a long title, the text will be referred to further in the study as the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis.

27 Cf. Zanetti, Les miracles, 42–109, the miracles of the saint have been explored and the texts in Arabic and in French translation were issued according to a manuscript written around 1549. Schenke recently published the miracles in the Coptic language based on the fragment in the British Library Or. 3581 B (38) firstly, then on the manuscripts Paris B.N. 129.15 and Borgia. Copt. 109 and finally on the Berlin fragment P. 9036, Schenke, Das koptisch-hagiographische Dossier, 206–209 (London fragment), 212–267 (two manuscripts, from Paris and Naples, with comments), 270–273 (Berlin fragment), and accompanied the texts on the fragments with introductions and comments ibid., 193–205, 210–211, 268, 274–276. Earlier, some of the miracles were published by Paul Deves, based on the Paris manuscript, P. Deves, Un étrange miracle copte de saint Kolouthos: le paralytique et la prostituée, AB 98 (1980) 363–379; idem, Autres miracles coptes de saint Kolouthos, AB 99 (1981) 284–301. The book of 1997, which encountered a rather negative critique has already been mentioned. Ramez Boutros points out that the number of the episodes in the collections

28 According to, R. Basset, Le Synaxaire arabe jacobite (réduction copte) IV, Les mois de Barmahat, Barmoudah et Bachons, PO 16 (1922) 412–413, a parallel Arabic text with a translation into French, the contents of which are summarised here. Somewhat different data on the saint had been conveyed in a memoir in a synaxarion for which no literature is listed, recounted in the book, Four martyrologies, 14, 17, where it was pointed out that, according to the text in the synaxarion, the saint had not been burned, but decapitated. ibid., 17. Unfortunately, the edition of an Arabic manuscript from the thirteenth century has not been available – a translation into Latin was issued by Jacques Forget, Synaxarium Alexandrinum II, ed. I. Forget, Louvain 1912, and he published a version in Arabic earlier, Synaxarium Alexandrinum I, ed. I. Forget, Louvain 1905. Forget's editions were quoted by Walter Crum, Colluthos, 326.

29 Delheuye, Synaxarium, 695.34–42. It should be recalled that Hermopolis (Shmun) was mentioned as the place where the court was in session in the second Pashion, the saint healed the blind man in the
Many churches and monasteries were erected in honour of Saint Colluthos throughout Egypt, and the oldest buildings, founded by the ninth century, will be presented here (Fig. 3).

According to the first Passio and most of the texts dedicated to him, the saint was martyred in Antinoe. His main shrine was in that city. The earliest preserved source mentioning the martyrdom of Saint Colluthos is Palladios’ Lausiac History, written in the year 420.30 In a much later narrative, the History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt, compiled in about 1190, which was regarded until recently to have been written by Abu Al-Salih the Armenian at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the monastery in Ansina (Antinoe) in which the body of the martyr Colluthos was laid to rest31 and the one in Asyut (Lycopolis), south of Antinoe, where the bodies of Colluthos and the holy martyr Bagham were laid to rest, are listed.32 It seems that the saint was deeply revered later in the area around Asyut (Lycopolis), as well. Al-Maqrizi, a historian and topographer from the first half of the fifteenth century, testifies to this. He noted that next to the nearby town of Rifah al-Gharbi there was a church to Saint Colluthos, the doctor and monk who miraculously healed people of eye inflammations, and that the feast of the saint was celebrated there.33

Old writings show that he was very popular in nearby Hermopolis. In the Encomium of Isaac of Antinoe, composed before 861, there is a mention of the saint’s visit to Shmun (Hermopolis), where he healed a blind man. Moreover, the brief note in the Synaxarion of the Church of Constantinople, assumed to have summarised the content of a lost Greek text, describes Saint Colluthos as a martyr in Hermopolis (ἐν Ἑρμουπόλει). This may be the trace of the ancient tradition, or the echo of an attempt by the neighboring city to strengthen the cult of the saint from Antinoe.34 Written sources, mostly from the early seventh century, repeatedly mentioned the buildings dedicated to Saint Colluthos in Hermopolis, and apparently a small church and a chapel existed next to the gate, and perhaps one more building erected in his honour.35

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31 B. T. A. Evetts, Churches and monasteries of Egypt and some neighbouring countries, Oxford 1895, 244, fol. 86b, cf. Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 126; Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 58 (mentions that Abul Makarim wrote in the thirteenth century that some relics of the saint were also kept in the monastery of Saint Colluthos in Asyut). About the name of the text and the earlier opinions on the time of its creation, its author, his role models and sources, and the fact that he visited some churches and monasteries and received indirect information on the others, ibid., IX–XXV. Johannes den Heijer has made a great effort to distinguish the history of the writing, I. den Heijer, The composition of the history of the churches and monasteries of Egypt: some preliminary remarks, in: Acts of the fifth international congress of Coptic studies (Washington, 12–15 August 1992) II/1, ed. D. W. Johnson, Roma 1993, 209–219. He points out that in 1895 Evets published the second part of the text on the basis of the then only known manuscript kept in Paris which records the name of one Abu Salih the Armenian, the owner of the book or one of the later compilers, which is why the conclusion was drawn that he was the writer. Much later, in 1984, Father Samuel of the Monastery of the Syrians edited the first and the third parts using a manuscript in Munich, and in 1992, as Bishop Samuel, he translated the first part into English (the two books have been unavailable to us). So den Heijer comes to the following conclusions: 1. part refers to Lower Egypt and a part of Cairo and originated somewhere between 1160 and 1187, 2. refers to other parts of the capital and Upper Egypt and briefly to some areas outside of Egypt, written in about 1190, 3. narrates about Sinai, Syria, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Rome and was written between 1200 and 1220 and, finally, 4. is the addition of an unknown writer from the fourteenth century. He has tried to clarify as much as possible the complicated history of the creation of the text, the chronology, the number of writers, and singled out Abu al-Makarim, whom he credited for the composition of the first part.

32 Evetts, Churches and monasteries, 251, fol. 90a; Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 126.

33 Evetts, op. cit., 344, chapter 60 (Appendix); Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 126; Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 57.

34 Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 127, cf. Delahaye, Synaxarion, 695.34–42. Boutrous believes that the memory in the Synaxarion of the Church of Constantinople is a brief version of a lost Greek text, and that the decline of the city of Antinoe may have been one of the reasons for the displacement of the worship of the saint to the other area, Boutrous, L’hagiographie des saints thérapeutes, 231, n. 5.

35 Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 123. The fiscal documents from the beginning of the seventh century have been preserved, as well as other important written sources, so as many as 45 church-
Moreover, he was the patron saint of the hospital in the city. Finally, at the beginning of the seventh century, there was mention of buildings dedicated to the saint in the vicinity of Hermopolis, in the village of Thrake, and at the site recorded as τόπος του Μινιου. Saint Colluthos is among the saints in whose honour numerous churches were built along the Nile, those who were revered in all the regions of Egypt. Churches dedicated to him were recorded in Arsinos (632) and in the villages of Talaø near Oxyrhynchus (sixth century) and of Aphrodito (sixth century), as well as a church or a monastery in ancient Apollinopolis Heptakomias (Ἐπτακωμία), which already existed in the fifth century, and perhaps should be recognised in an edifice registered at the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century in the region of Apollinopolis (τοπαρχία Απόλλωνος). In the documents, shrines of Saint Colluthos (τόπος απὸ Κολλούθου τόπος ἁγίου Κολλούθου) were recorded in the cities of Panopolis (599–600) and Apollonos Ano, Ἀπόλλωνος πόλεως (between 703 and 715). One should recall that the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis was composed in honour of the consecration of a church in the village of Pneuit, northwest of Panopolis. In the village of Psenantonios, near the city of Koptos, the resident priest of Saint Colluthos signed an attestation (eighth century), as indirect evidence of the existence of a religious institution dedicated to the saint. It was noted that in Cairo, a church to Saint Colluthos was built in the ninth century in the quarter of Al Hamra al-Wusta, and that another one of the same dedication was destroyed by fire in the twelfth century and later restored.

es are listed in the city, ibid., 289–294. Among them, besides a small church and a chapel (both marked as εὐκτήριον), there were two more buildings erected in honour of Saint Colluthos in the seventh or eighth century. ibid., 290–291, 292–293.

36 Ibid., 238. 37 Ibid., 123–124, 293. On one grave stele found at Tourna near Hermopolis, there is an inscription with the invocation to the God of Saint Colluthos, ibid., 326 and n. 65. 38 The most numerous are the churches dedicated to the archangel Michael and Saint John, followed by those built in honour of Saints Colluthos, Theodore and Victor. In addition, Saint Colluthos is one of the saints whose shrines can be followed continuously in sources from the second half of the fifth to the first half of the ninth century, cf. ibid., 232, 256, 257, 260, 261, 264. Finally, he enters the group of saints mentioned in more than 40 documents, like Victor and Theodore, as well as the archangel Michael. ibid., 233, 253, 262, 263, 369. 39 Ibid., 123, 124. The existence of the shrines in these cities can be followed thanks to written sources, which are particularly numerous for the churches in Arsinos (ibid., 283–285, a list of 25 churches) and in Oxyrhynchus (ibid., 286–288, a table of 30 churches, but the one in the village of Talaø, mentioned as Saint Colluthos in κύριον Ταλαο, is absent, ibid., 288), and in the village of Aphrodito and its surroundings (ibid., 296–298, listed are 26 edifices). It should be noted that, according to the Coptic Arabic synaxarion, the saint spent three years in the dungeon in El-Bahnasa, i.e. Oxyrhynchus.

40 Ibid., 124, 295. 41 Ibid., 124. For sacred edifices in Panopolis, ibid., 298, in Apollonos Ano, ibid., 304. Boutros notes, on the basis of Coptic and Arabic texts, that the saint was particularly venerated in three areas – Antinoë, Hermopolis and Panopolis, Boutros, L’historiographie des saints thérapeutes, 234, 234–234.

42 Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 57, 58; Grossmann, Antinoopolis, 273. One should remember the new dating of the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis. The second Encomium, 130–131.

43 Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 124, for the churches in Koptos and its surroundings, ibid., 299. 44 Evett, Churches and monasteries, 108, fol. 32a (Hamra al-Wusta). 45 This fragment (the British Museum BM 329) by Walter Till, on the words in the Lausiac History, and in the second Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis, described as having been preserved, Evett, Churches and monasteries, 254–255, fol. 91b (the church in Dalas), 234, fol. 81b (the church in Kus and a source next to it), 281, fol. 103b (damaged and restored monastery in Qena); Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 58.

46 Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 126; eadem, The cult of saints: a haven of continuity in a changing world?, in: Egypt in the Byzantine world, 300–700, ed. R. Bagnall, Cambridge 2007, 357. She notes the lines in the Coptic description of the miracle published according to a fragment (the British Museum BM 329) by Walter Till, mentioning the body of holy Apa Colluthos in his martyrion on the mountain of his city Antinoë, W. C. Till, Koptische Heiligen- und Märtnerlegenden 1, OCA 102 (1935) 173 (in Coptic), 179 (in German). It is the miracle about Eudocia and Theognostos, who were childless for 40 years, described in the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis. However, in the new edition of the Coptic text (Vienna fragment K 9524) it is recorded that they went to the body of Saint Colluthos in his martyrion in the necropolis of the city of Antinoe (Schenke, Das koptisch-hagiographische Dossier, 187), and in the Arabic text it is said only that the spouses went to the body of the saint in the city of Antinoë (Nessim Youssef, The second Encomium, 170), and in both versions the saint appeared and told them to go to Pneuit. The discrepancies in the contents of the texts in different languages, as well as in two Coptic examples, show that, despite the edition of many scriptures written in honour of Saint Colluthos, caution is needed when considering his cult. Arietta Papaconstantinou also points out that, according to the History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt, the body of the saint was still in the martyrion on the mountain in the twelfth century, when its writer visited the site (Papaconstantinou, The cult of saints, 357, n. 28). She notes, Evett, Churches and monasteries, 244, fol. 8b. However, there it is mentioned that the body of Saint Colluthos was in the monastery dedicated to him in Ansina (which is already quoted), without a precise indication of where the complex was located. It should be remembered that the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis described that Christ told Colluthos that he should be buried next to his father on the mountain, and that the servant Magi did so, cf. Nessim Youssef, The second Encomium, 158, 160.


48 A. Papaconstantinou, Oracles chrétiens dans l’Égypte byzantine: le témoignage du papyrus, Zeitschrift zur Papyrologie und Epigraphik 104 (Bonn 1994) 282–283; eadem, Le culte des saints, 123,
Recently, it seems that the oracle gradually grew beside a modest, old, three-aisled family funerary church with an underground burial chamber, built of mud-brick sometime at the beginning of the sixth century, in which some changes were subsequently made, thus adapting it to new requirements. The rooms were added to it somewhat later, firstly those to the south, so the church was located in the northeast corner of the complex. Since numerous ex vota for healing have been found within the shrine, these chambers, as well as those built later, are presumed to have served mostly for accommodation of the sick during incubation. The complex was surrounded by high walls, and later expanded to the west, adding on new rooms, as well as small swimming pools in the northwest part.

During recent research in the southern part of ancient Antinoe, a vast Christian healing centre was found.

125, 126, 338, 339, with sources and literature. In earlier archaeological research 74 papyri biglitti with questions to the oracle, mostly left unpublished, as well as two fragments of a papyrus found from the beginning of the seventh century were found, ibid., 126. During new excavations, which began in 2002, a large number of biglitti were discovered, so almost 200 specimens, including those that were left unpublished, are now known, A. Delattre, Nouveaux textes copistes d’Antinoë, in: Proceedings of the 25st international congress of papyrology (Ann Arbor, July 29–August 4, 2007). American studies in papyrology, ed. T. Gagos, Ann Arbor 2010, 172, 173. On the biglitti, v. also, Trenta testi greci da papiri letterarii e documentari editi in occasione del XVII Congresso internazionale di papirologia (Napoli, 16–26 Maggio 1983) ed. M. Manfredi, Firenze 1983, 68–69, nos. 20–21 (L. Papini); L. Papini, Biglitti oracolari in copio dalla necropolis nord di Antinoë, in: Acts of the Second international congress of Coptic study (Roma, 22–26 September 1980) ed. T. Orlandi, F. Wisse, Roma 1985, 245–255; Antinoe cent’anni dopo. Catalogo della mostra Firenze Palazzo Medici Riccardi 10 luglio–1 novembre 1998, ed. L. Del Francia Barocas, Firenze 1998, 100–101 (L. Papini); L. Papini, D. Frankfurter, Fragments of the Sortes Sancctorum from the shrine of St. Colluthus, in: Pilgrimage and holy space in late antique Egypt, ed. D. Frankfurter, Leiden–Boston–Köln 1998, 393–401. The way the faithful addressed and how they received the prophecies was not new in Egypt. Apparently, they would hand over two biglitti folded like little packages with a question written in two versions, one positive and one negative. The receiver would announce the answer, according to the custom that originated from the Pharaonic epoch and survived during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, by extracting whether the burials were carried out in the monastery or the slabs were taken later from the northern necropolis and used for some other purposes. A Coptic inscription on one of them mentions God of the holy Colluthus. A. Delattre, J. Dijkstra, J. van der Vliet, Christian inscriptions from Egypt and Nubia 2 (2014). The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists 52 (Cincinnati 2015) 308.

48 Peter Grossmann researched and interpreted the findings meticulously, Grossmann, Antinoopolis, 241–282. It is assumed that the shrine ceased to exist shortly after the Arab conquest or a century later, ibid., 246. For the ex vota made of metal with the representations of full figures and parts of the body, Antinoe cent’anni dopo, 101, nos. 89–98 (M. Manfredi).

It had a large, three-aisled basilica from the second half of the fifth century, called D3, with built-in beds along the walls and between the columns of the two colonnades. Alongside the lateral porches of the added atrium there were numerous dormitories for the sick, and beside the south wall of the basilica was a richly decorated room with an apse, and a western chamber with a large rectangular niche for a sarcophagus at the western end. Since Saint Colluthos was the only holy healer in the city, it is assumed that the complex was dedicated to him.

The shrine in Antinoe, otherwise rarely mentioned, is unusually absent in the written sources after the end of the sixth century. However, the deacon of Alexandria during the time of Patriarch Cyril II (1078–1092), Mawhub ibn Muffarig al-Iksandarani, who visited many churches and monasteries in Egypt, wrote that the relics of Saint Colluthos were housed in Antinoe.

The body of the saint is believed to have been transferred at some point from a grave cut into a rock on a hill to a more representative site in the city. Despite the carefully conducted exploration of two complexes in Antinoe, it is impossible to reliably judge where and when the healing shrine existed. The papyrus biglitti from the sixth and seventh centuries testify that it was at the northern necropolis at that time. Then it was apparently moved into the complex with the large old basilica in the city with premises that were added for healing purposes, the latest finds of which originate from the eighth or ninth century. However, there are no signs that the papyri or ex vota of healed patients were found there. It is possible that customs had changed over time and that there were no more of those originating from ancient Egyptian oracles, but that the healing method was based primarily on incubation, often practised in eastern Christian shrines dedicated to the holy physicians. As for the tomb on the mount of the city of Antinoe, one should raise the question of whether, in the eighth or ninth century, Pheroamon of Panopolis, when he compiled the Encomium containing numerous claims about ancient history that have not confirmation in written sources, followed an earlier narrative or invented the story about the first resting place of the saint’s body.

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There are not many preserved images of Saint Colluthos. However, bearing in mind that the ancient churches and monasteries in Egypt were severely damaged, these scant remaining examples point to the deep veneration of this saint. Probably the most famous among them, discovered in Antinoe, in the burial chamber of a girl, Theodosia,

49 Grossmann, Antinoopolis, 272–273, 274, for the last phase of excavations of the church, idem, Antinoopolis January/February 2012, 84–85. It seems that the fragments of pottery from the eighth–ninth century are the latest finds, cf. ibid., 84. For information on the shrine in Antinoe provided in the descriptions of miracles, Zanetti, Les miracles, 51.


51 Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 58, with cited unavailable book, O. H. E. Burmester, History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, Cairo 1959, 362.
who died at the age of fifteen, was destroyed long ago. Its appearance is known thanks to the water colour produced immediately after its discovery, in the course of works carried out during 1936 and 1937 (Fig. 4). The saint, marked by the inscription as ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΟΛΛΟΥΘΟΣ, wears a white chiton with black strips, potamoi, and a white himation. He is giving a blessing with his right hand, while the left hand rests on the shoulder of the deceased girl. There is no accord in the views on the time when the fresco was painted. They range from the fourth to the sixth century, although it is generally accepted in recent studies that it belonged in the latter century.\textsuperscript{52} The assumption is that Saint Colluthos should be recognised in the image of a saint on a small icon made in encaustic technique (21 × 19.9 cm), which is kept in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. It was painted in the late fifth or early sixth century and also comes from Antinoe. It was discovered in a grave chamber, in a vase containing three more small scale panels depicting Christian subjects. The half-figure of the saint is portrayed, facing forwards. He has grey, short thick hair and a rounded beard. He is clad in a bright chiton and a himation and is holding an object that resembles a scroll in his right hand.\textsuperscript{53} A painting on linen cloth (57.5 × 123 cm), part of a private collection in London since the 1970s, has recently been researched and published. It shows Saint Colluthos, marked with the inscription ΑΠΑ ΚΟΛΛΟΥΘΟΣ, spreading his arms in prayer. The picture is rather damaged but one can make out that he has short grey hair and a rounded beard, and is dressed in a bright-coloured chiton and himation, with two black bands on his upper arms. There is good reason to assume that the fabric is the upper part of a curtain which originally bore the image of the saint’s full-length figure, today preserved only from the waist up. It is believed to have been done in the sixth century and to have originated from Antinoe, from the Church of Saint Colluthos where his martyrium existed.\textsuperscript{54} In Deir Abou Henri, near the peak of the mountain, at about 2 km south of the ruins of ancient Antinoe, there is an underground structure, called a church, frescoed in the sixth or seventh

\textsuperscript{52} E. Breccia, Le prime ricerche italiane ad Antinoe (Scavi dell’Istituto Papirologico Fiorentino negli anni 1936–1937), Aegyptus. Rivista italiana di epigrafia e di papirologia 16 (Milano 1938) 293–308 (for the painting positioned on the south wall of the chamber and the image of Saint Colluthos, ibid., 299–304, figs. 6, 7, 8); A. Grabar, Martyrium. Recherches sur le cult du reliquaire et l’art chrétien antique II. Iconographie, Paris 1946, 34; Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 127; Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 58, Fig. 8; M. Zibawi, Koptische Kunst. Das christliche Ägypten von der Spätantike bis zur Gegenwart, München 2004, 22. Abb. 9, with a high quality colour illustration. Arietta Papaconstantinou reminds that Theodosia’s tomb was located within the necropolis in which the monuments with epitaphs addressed to the God of Saint Colluthus were found, Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 330.

\textsuperscript{53} Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 58, for the icon cf. Age of spirituality. Late antique and early Christian art, third to seventh century, ed. K. Weitzmann, New York 1979, 551–552, No. 496 (N. Paterson Ševčenko), with detailed descriptions of the appearance of the icon and of the place where it was found.

\textsuperscript{54} Byzantium. Treasures of Byzantine art and culture from British collections, ed. D. Buckton, London 1994, 80, no. 72 (M. Vassilaki), where it was first published; Papaconstantinou, Le culte des saints, 127; Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 57–63, a study dedicated to the painting on the cloth, the iconography and cult of Saint Colluthos, as well as the question of the purpose of the item.
century. The bust of the saint in a medallion accompanied by the inscription Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΟΛΛΟΥΘΟΣ was observed in the church's room III, on wall 6. Unfortunately, due to major damage, it is not possible to discern his facial features nor his hair or beard. One can notice only the halo and the bright chiton and himation and the dark lines of the potamoi, seemingly two, in the area of his chest.55

The representations of Saint Colluthus have been preserved in Bawit, in several buildings decorated with frescoes in the sixth or seventh century. He is portrayed in the vestibule on the south side of the building, which was named Chapel 17 during the investigation carried out in 1903. On the east wall of that entrance, among the saints depicted waist-length, one can see Saint Colluthus marked by the inscription Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΟΛΛΟΥΘΟΣ. The saint has short grey hair and a rounded beard. He is clad in bright robes, a tunic with two dark potamoi and a cloak and over his shoulders, a strap secured on his chest. His right hand is visible also, but one cannot make out whether he is carrying anything in it.56 Saint Colluthus is one of the three saints standing next to the archangels Gabriel and Michael, placed behind the Virgin Orans and the apostles in the foreground in the altar apse of Chapel 20. One can read the inscription ΑΠΑ ΚΟΛΛΟΘΟΣ beside him. His hair is grey, straight, short and thick, he has a strong, round-ed beard and is wearing a white tunic with dark potamoi and a white cloak. He seems to be giving a blessing with his right hand, while the left hand is hidden by the figure of the apostle standing in front of him.57 His image was probably painted in Chapel 17. Namely, one can distinguish the figure of a saint, recorded in the literature as Philotheos to the north of the large arch on the west wall. Based on his appearance, as well as the remnant of the inscription, which can be read as Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ (ΦΙΛΟΘΕΟΣ) ΘΟΣ, one may assume that he is Saint Colluthus. His face is destroyed and only a thick, grey, rounded beard can be seen. He has a white tunic with dark potamoi and a white cloak. He holds an object that looks like a scalpel in his right hand and in the left one a scroll or etui, as well as the strap of a decorated bag with higher lateral parts in the form of two upright cylinders and a lower centre closed by a triangular flap, of the kind commonly referred to in literature as 'with ears'.58

Finally, the damaged festival hall erected in honour of the god Aman by the Pharaoh Thutmose III at the site of today's Karnak was converted into a monastery church. Based on the times when some of the saints depicted in the church were alive, one may conclude that the paintings were not done before the seventh century. The image of Saint Colluthus with the inscription of his name Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ // ΚΟΛΛΟΥΘΟΣ, on the northeast side of the fourth northern pillar of the western bay, was discovered in 1925. He was, in all likelihood, represented as a full-length figure, but only the part down to the chest has been preserved. On his right, an elongated shape referred to in the literature as a painted pillar could be seen, and further to the right was a small building with a triangular pediment with a cross on the top, as well as a palm tree leaning against it. The saint, apparently, had grey short hair and a rounded beard and wore a bright-coloured chiton and himation. It was impossible to make out whether he was holding something in his hands.59

The representations of Saint Colluthus have been preserved, therefore, in Antinoe and its neighbourhood, in Bawit, Karnak and the Monastery of the Syrians. Based on the better preserved among the listed examples, one may conclude that the saint had a clearly recognisable face and simple apparel, consisting of a tunic with potamoi and a cloak. He is usually portrayed giving a blessing with his right hand or with both hands extended in a gesture of prayer and he is rarely holding an object such as a scroll. Only in Chapel 17 in Bawit and in the Church of the Monastery of the Syrians is he depicted with medical equipment.

There were many more paintings of the saint, of course. Written sources testify to some of them. Two small icons were registered in an inventory of the furnishings in a house in Oxyrhynchus from the beginning of the seventh century. In one of them Saint Colluthus, his head surrounded by gold, was portrayed, ικονίδα δύο, μίαν δὲ τοῦ Αγίου Κολλουθούν τη κεφαλή.60 The Encomium of Ptolemaios of Panopolis narrates that, on the day of the consecration of the new church in Pneuit, an icon of Saint Colluthus emanated a wonderful and sweet perfume that continued to spread during the days when the text was compiled.61 Unfortu...

55 J. Clédat, Notes archéologiques et philologiques, Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale (=BIFAO) 2 (Paris 1902) 54, 56, Pl. IV, fig. 1, with the water colour illustration of the fresco. For the basic information on these paintings, Zibawi, Koptsische Kunst, 56, Pl. IV , fig. 1, with the water colour illustration of the fresco. For the illustrations and judging by the appearance of his face, and given the fact that the other two portrayed saints were marked by the inscriptions published there, that he was represented next to the archangel at the northern end of the apse; C. C. Walters, Monastic archaeology in Egypt, Warminster 1974, 122; Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 58. A colour photo of the fresco in the apse of the chapel, of small di-

56 Ch. Palanque, Rapport sur les recherches effectuées à Bawit en 1903, BIFAO 5 (1906) 9, Pl. VIII. Next to him are depicted Ecclesia in the north and Saint Cyprian in the south.

57 J. Maspero, Rapport sur les fouilles entreprises à Bawit, Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres 57/4 (1913) 295–296, the report on the discovery of frescoes in January 1913, when the complex was insufficiently explored and the room had not yet been given its name, with the concise and succinct description of the paintings and the readings of the inscriptions (followed by the observation that the frescoes are stylistically related to some tenth century miniatures), but not accompanied by il-


59 H. Munier, M. Pillet, Les édifices chrétiens de Karnak, Revue de l’Égypte ancienne 2 (Paris 1929) 66–67, fig. 4. A rather freely made drawing of the fresco was published. Therefore, one cannot make out whether his right hand could be distinguished in the drawing, as well as whether the elongated shape directly to the left of him should be under-

60 Ibid., 125, 353.

61 Nessim Youssef, The second Encomium, 163–164. The scent coming out of the wall is mentioned also in a miracle in Coptic, of
nately, there is no data about the appearance of the image. Anyway, there were certainly a great many representations of him. Suffice it to recall that at least one image of the saint was definitely placed in each of the churches dedicated to him, which, were quite numerous, if one is only to judge by the written sources known today.

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Antinoe was a city with a rich medical tradition. It has already been said that many of the questions on papyrus, addressed to the oracle discovered in the northern necropolis, refer to the health and often have the invocation to the God of Saint Colluthos. In that ancient cemetery numerous Coptic and some Greek stelae were found, apparently from the seventh century, bearing inscriptions with a prayer to the God of Saint Colluthos to have mercy on the soul of the deceased, and in a Coptic one it was recorded that Saint Colluthos was a doctor who treated both souls and bodies. In the *Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis*, composed in the eighth or ninth century, there is an account that after the consecration of the new church in Pneuit, at midnight on the same day, the writer and Apa Cosma and Apa Savian saw Saint Colluthos and his servant Magi, following him with a bag of drugs. The saint filled his hands with medicaments and threw them among the sick who were healed and a multitude of people assembled in the church, and many others, were cured of their illnesses. Saint Colluthos is also referred to as a true physician in various writings composed after the ninth century. He was particularly esteemed as a healer of eye diseases. A recipe for collyrium, an eye unguent attributed to the doctor and martyr Colluthos, was recorded in one papyrus from the ninth or tenth century. In addition, the already mentioned historian and topographer Al-Maqrizi, who lived in the first half of the fifteenth century, said that Saint Colluthos was a doctor and a monk and performed miraculous cures of eye inflammations.

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The scene of Saint Colluthos performing an operation on an eye in the church of the Monastery of the Syrians is unique among the preserved ancient representations of healings by holy physicians. Namely, the miracles described in their *Vitae* or *Passia* were designed in medieval Eastern Christian art on the model of the scenes of healing performed by Christ – the holy physicians approached from the left and addressed or made a gesture of blessing with their right hand towards the sick on the right, while in the background was a landscape or simple architectural scenery. There are no illustrations of the events narrated in the collections of *Miracles* in the preserved cycles dedicated to the holy doctors. However, since the scene from the Monastery of the Syrians is composed in a completely different way, one needs to check whether the cure of an eye disease or visual impairment described in some of the texts dedicated to the saint is represented. This is necessary because in the collections of miracles of the holy doctors there are narratives about different methods of treatment, from completely unusual ones to those in which the saints appear to the sick in their sleep and perform operations, the results of which the patients see as they wake up in the morning. The *Encomium of Isaak of Antinoe* was not „specialised” for certain ailments. For example, Saints Cosmas and Damian and Saints Cyrus and John treated eye diseases among other health issues, cf. L. Lascaratos, *Miraculous opthalmological therapies in Byzantium*, Documenta Ophthalmologica 81 (Dordrecht 1992) 145–152, where it was pointed out that about 20 percent of the healing miracles in the shrine of Saints Cyrus and John in Menouthis near Alexandria referred to eye diseases, ibid., 148–149. The *Churches and monasteries*, 344, chapter 60 (Appendix); Vassilaki, *A painting of Saint Kollouthos*, 57.

tinæ recounts that once Colluthos went to Shmun, where he healed a blind man who was begging with his son. The man was almost naked. All that was left were the rags of his former clothes. The saint took off his own undershirt and gave it to the blind man. While putting it on, the man's eyes brushed against the undershirt and his eyesight was suddenly restored. The other miraculous cures took place after the death of the saint. The healing of visual impairment is mentioned in a miracle in the same Encomium in the narrative about a cripple. His family brought him to the shrine of Saint Colluthos. He spent a month in the church and even slept in it, but he was not cured because he lacked faith. In his impatience, he grumbled and complained that he had seen a blind man applying the oil from a lamp to his eyes and had regained his eyesight. In the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis, the description of the first of the four miracles that occurred in Pneuit recounts that the village was full of pagans. One Cyprianus, a pagan, and his wife who suffered from a bad and painful wound, lived there. She was carried to Apollo's temple, but it was to no avail. Eventually, she asked to be taken to the Church of Saint Colluthos. This happened on the first day of a pagan festival the celebration of which lasted an entire week. The saint appeared to her and promised healing if she converted to the Christian faith. He called his servant Magi, who was in charge of carrying his bag of medical equipment, took out a medicament, applied it to the wound and cured the woman. After seven days of celebration, the husband, concerned because he could not find his wife at home, took to searching for her. He learned that she was in the Church of Saint Colluthos. He wanted to tear down the building and came with a great crowd of pagans, but when they arrived at the church entrance next to the well, the saint came out through the door and blew in their faces so they immediately became blind. They did not know where to go and remained there for three days and three nights. Tired and weak with hunger and thirst, and feeling humbled, they cried out for help. Saint Colluthos relented and restored their eyesight. They asked to be baptised, so the bishop Phoibamon, the writer of the text, came with a large escort and baptised all the inhabitants of the village except for an evil magician and intractable idolator named Poinem. One of the miracles preserved in Arabic speaks of a blind man who went to the Church of Saint Colluthos to pray for healing. At the same time, the husband of a virtuous woman, suspecting that she was unfaithful to him, fell ill and he was brought to the same shrine. The saint appeared to the blind man and told him to pour milk from the breast of a virtuous woman into his eyes. Despite the husband's objections, the wife obeyed the saints' orders: the blind man was cured, and the husband, convinced of the virtue of his wife by this miracle, was healed because his illness had been the consequence of jealousy. Based on the stories of the healing of people who had problems with their eyesight, it is clear that the scene painted in the church of the Monastery of the Syrians is not an illustration of any of the events described in the preserved writings dedicated to the saint. In the first case, the blind man's eyesight was restored when the undershirt given by the saint brushed against his eyes, in the second, a sick man anointed his eyes with oil, in the third, the saint simply restored the pagans' vision, and in the fourth, the blind man poured milk into his own eyes.

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In the scene in the church of the Monastery of the Syrians, the saint is holding a scalpel in his right hand and is about to touch the eye of the sick man with it. It is clear, therefore, that an eye operation is represented there. When designing the scene, the painter did not follow standard models of representing healing and, in all likelihood, introduced details from everyday life, that is, from the contemporary medical practice. He could know what surgical operations looked like. Written sources testify that they were performed in public, in front of people who gathered to watch them, like in a theatre.

73 Minutely on the miracle, with a translation of the Arabic text based on the book written around 1549, Zanetti, Les miracles, 46, 95–98. That is, in total, the sixth, or, according to the mentioned manuscript, the fifth miracle. It is briefly referred to by Vassilaki, A painting of Saint Kollouthos, 57. For the Arabic and Coptic manuscripts containing that miracle of Saint Colluthos, Zanetti, Les miracles, 56. The significance of the saint as a healer of eye diseases was enduring. This is testified by a miracle which happened much later, in 1495/1496. A woman of reputable family lost her eyesight. She sat in her house for eight days and invoked Saint Colluthos and during the night of the eighth day, between Sunday and Monday, the saint appeared to her, wiped her eyes with a green handkerchief and applied the collyrium and thus regained her vision, ibid., 48, 106–108. It is the last miracle in the manuscript in Arabic from about 1549.

74 As far as it is known, no healing scene or cycle dedicated to the holy doctors, whose miracles were extensively described (Saints Cosmas and Damian from Rome, Saints Cyrus and John and Saint Sampson the Xenodochos) have been preserved. On the contrary, in Eastern Christian medieval painting one can see the cycles of the scenes describing the miracles of Saints Cosmas and Damian from Asia, as well as Saint Panteleimon, sometimes accompanied by episodes about his teacher, Saint Hermolaus. The observations were made on the basis of a wider study of the veneration and the representation of the holy physicians, so numerous examples and extensive literature are not noted in this text.

75 Cf. L. J. Bliquez, Two lists of Greek surgical instruments and the state of surgery in Byzantine times, DOP 38 (1984) 194, with summarised words of two Constantinopolitan patriarchs, John Chrysostom (1407) and John Nesteuves (1595), as well as of John of Damascus (1749), cf. E. Dauterman Maguire, H. P. Maguire, M. J. Duncan-Flowers, Art and holy powers in the early Christian house, Urbana–Champaign 1989, 199, where the lines of John Chrysostom are emphasised, especially those (in the thirteenth homily) narrating that the doctors, when they were about to perform an operation, did not take the patient into a corner, but placed in the middle of the market-place in order for passers-by gather around, thus creating a kind of theatre.
ver, Palladios noted that doctors and pharmacists lived in the Nitrian Desert itself.76

One can see, first of all, that the doctor is sitting and the patient is standing in the scene, which was not the custom, of course. Celsus (Aulus Cornelius Celsus) in the book On Medicine, which he compiled between the years 18 and 39 AD, in the chapter on surgery, describing the procedure of removing a pterygium, said that the patient should be seated facing the physician or with his back to him so that his head rests upon the doctor’s lap. He added that some physicians preferred the first position if the left eye was afflicted and the latter if it was the right one.77

The scene in question is, in all probability, unique in medieval Eastern Christian art, and there are no preserved images to compare it with.78 One should point out, however, that the scenes of eye surgery in medieval medical manuals in the West painted until the end of the twelfth century were also detached from reality, as both doctor and patient were shown standing.79 It was not until later that images of the doctor standing and the patient sitting appeared in these kinds of books.80


78 It should be noted that Boutros records a much later icon, from 1777, at the Church of Saint Colluthos in Rif, on the mountain west of Asyut. It shows the miraculous healing of the son of a widow at the request of his sister – the saint is embracing the widow’s son to heal him, the widow is in the centre, on the other side is Colluthos’ sister Dádýánă, standing and raising her arm in a gesture of supplication, and in the centre, above the widow, is a small cabinet containing medicines, Boutros, L’ hagiographie des saints thérapeutes, 238–239 and n. 58. It has not been possible to obtain precise information on the appearance of the icon. In the Encomium of Phoibamon of Panopolis it is stated that the name of the saint’s sister was Dadiana, but there is no mention of the healing of the widow’s son, cf. Nessim Youssef, The second Encomium, 164–171. The same is the case with the Encomium of Isaac of Antinoe, where the sister is named Tadiane, cf. Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan library, 52–64.

79 These are illustrations of cataract surgery in the manuscripts of a medical Miscellany from twelfth century England, Oxford, Bodley, MS Ashmole 1462, fol. 10r (L. MacKinney, Medical illustrations in medieval manuscripts, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1965, 70, Fig. 69, cf. http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/mackinney/id/4045 [7. 11. 2017]), the writings of Pseudo-Hippocrates, British Library, Harl. 1585, fol. 9v, from the third quarter of the twelfth century (http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mackinney/id/3644/rec/10 [7. 11. 2017]) and a Medical and Herbal Collection from the late twelfth century, London, British Museum, Sloane MS 1975, fol. 9r (P. Murray Jones, Medieval medicine in illuminated manuscripts, London 1998, 79–81, Fig. 72, cf. http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN. ASPISize=mid&IIIID=3113 [9. 01. 2018]). Medical manuscripts with illustrations of surgical operations appeared very rarely after the end of the twelfth century. New translations of writings from the Arabic into Latin, whereby the West came in contact with ancient Greek medical texts, were done during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and in the thirteenth century, the golden age of scholasticism, lectures on surgery became regular in Salerno, Bologna and other schools on the Apennine Peninsula. It is therefore assumed that the void between older paintings, which may have originated even from the traditions of Alexandria, and new secular illustrations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, may have appeared under the influence of the writing of new texts in the universities (Murray Jones, Medieval medicine, 82–84).

80 The manuscript of the book Chirurgia compiled by the famous doctor and surgeon, Dominican and bishop, Theodorik Bor-gognoni (1205–1296/8), Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 11226, fol. 55r, from the beginning of the fourteenth century, with the miniature of an eye surgery set in the initial (http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/mackinney/id/3939/rec/6 [7. 11. 2017]) and the Italian Medical Picture Book from 1510, London, British Museum, MS 197.d.2, fol. 15v, where a cataract surgery is presented (MacKinney, Medical illustrations, 71, Fig. 70, cf. http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/mackinney/id/3908 [7. 11. 2017]).

81 A. M. Friend Jr., The portraits of the evangelists in Greek and Latin manuscripts, Art Studies 5 (1927) 141, T. XV, XVII, Figs. 149–150, 162 (for the last two miniatures); D. V. Ainałow, The Hellenistic origins of Byzantine art, New Brunswick, N. J., 1961, 56–58, Figs. 27–29 (for the last three miniatures); A. Visser, From the republic of letters to the Olympics: the rise and fall of medical humanism in 67 portraits, in: Living in posterity. Essays in honour of Bart Weterweel, ed. J. F. van Di jkhuizen, P. Hoftijzer, J. Roding, P. Smith, Leiden 2004, 304, Fig. 2 (for

It is possible that the importance of the saint’s calling is indicated by depicting him sitting on a decorated stool. Namely, doctors were usually represented as being seated, from the period of late Antiquity. As an example one can mention the well-known manuscript of the encyclopedia by Dioscorides, a physician and pharmacologist from the first half of the first century. It was copied for Juliana Anicia (†528), and is now kept in Vienna. Portrayed in the book are seven pharmacologists on fol. 2v and seven famous doctors from Antiquity on fol. 3v. All of them are shown in a seated position in both illustrations. On fol. 4v there is a miniature of Dioscorides sitting in a chair while the personification of the Discovery (EΠΙΝΟΙΑ) bringing the root of the mandrake is approaching him (Fig. 5). In the scene in fol. 5v, the personification of the Reflection (ΕΙΣΙΝΟΙΑ) is standing in the middle, an artist sitting before an easel and painting the mandrake is on the left, whilst on the right Dioscorides is seated on a stool with an open book in his lap, and writing down something in it (Fig. 6). It is assumed that the first two images are copies of some older representations and that the portraits of Dioscorides, like those on the other two miniatures, appeared in the manuscripts of certain early recensions of his work.81 A sarcophagus from the fourth century found

Fig. 5. Vienna Dioscorides, fol. 4v, Dioscorides and the personification of Discovery (public domain photo)
near Ostia and kept in the Metropolitan Museum in New York should be mentioned as well. It shows a doctor sitting in a chair and reading a text written on a scroll. It is important to note that a cupboard is placed next to him, just like there is beside the saint on the fresco in the church of the Monastery of the Syrians. The cupboard doors are also open so that three shelves can be seen. The lower one is empty, on the middle shelf is a bowl, and on the upper one are some circular objects, possibly folded scrolls. Finally, at the top of the cabinet is an open rectangular and shallow box with surgical instruments.82 The representation of a doctor is painted in a miniature in the well-known manuscript Sacra Parallela, Paris gr. 923, a florilegium with quotations from biblical and patristic texts, mostly attributed to John of Damascus. There are conflicting opinions regarding the manuscript's place of origin. They range from Constantinople to the southern part of the Apennine Peninsula, and across to Palestine. In any case, it was produced in the ninth century probably soon after the iconoclastic crisis. The miniature is placed on the margin in fol. 210r. A doctor is sitting on a large stool with a foot stool, blending drugs in a mortar. Beside him is a shelf with four compartments containing various vessels, bowls on the two upper ones, and glass bottles on the two lower ones.83

The appearance of the doctors’ chambers, concisely indicated in the fresco in the Monastery of the Syrians, an earlier relief and a somewhat later miniature, is summarily described in some episodes of the collections of miracles. The Miracles of Saints Cyrus and John was compiled in Alexandria between 610 and 615 by the monk Sophronios, the future patriarch of Jerusalem. In the tenth miracle he narrates that a woman named Theodora had decided to bring her seriously ill baby daughter Marou to the physicians in Alexandria. But, in the night before her departure she saw herself in a dream walking across a deserted expanse and, after a long journey, came across the house of a doctor, where she found a monk sitting there. He was Saint Cyrus. Being a monk, he always had to wear the monk’s habit. As he was still a doctor by profession, a cupboard (πυργίσκος) stood before him. She entered inside, wondering if it was a physician's room (ὡς ιατροῦ τοῦτο καθότητεν). The saint, sitting on a chair at that moment spoke to her.84 In addition to that, in the thirtieth miracle of Saints Cosmas and Damian, which belongs to the fourth group, the date of which has not been established, there is mention of a cabinet with a latticed door for keeping medicines (τὴν τῶν φαρμάκων φυλαξάνι κηπελίδος χειρουργεῖν ήθελον) in the surgery room. Namely, a prominent citizen of Constantinople had a severe abscess in the upper part of his chest, which the doctors could not cure. On the advice of friends, he went to Kosmidion, obtained a bed inside the church and spent some time there. In a dream one night he saw the Virgin walking between Cosmas and Damian. She came towards him and told the saints to heal him. Cosmas and Damian lifted him up and transferred him to the xenon next door and took him to the operating room. In that chamber there was a cot for patients (i.e. an operating table) and a large medicine cupboard with a latticed door. The saints laid the sick man on the operating table. Cosmas pulled out his scalpel, while Damian held the patient down and anchored his feet with the grilled door of the cabinet.85

82 Dauterman Maguire, Maguire, Duncan-Flowers, Art and holy powers, 198, fig. 49.
83 K. Weitzmann, The miniatures of the Sacra Parallela Parisina Graecus 923, Princeton, N. J. 1979, 240, Pl. CI, 695; M. Parani, The first one). It is assumed that the earliest illustrated manuscript of his work was made in the first century. For the portrayal of the Evangelists, Christianity accepted the representations of seated figures, common for poets and philosophers in the pagan tradition, Friend, The portraits of the evangelists, 141–143, 145–146, 147, T. XV, XVI, XVII, Figs. 151–152, 153–163, 164 (who maintained the view that they were formed in Ephesus and the coastal cities of Asia Minor). It should be remembered that the preserved ancient images of the savants, i.e. philosophers, testify that they were also portrayed as seated. Sufice it to mention a few reliefs on the sarcophagi, cf. A. Grabar, Le premier art chrétien (200–395), Paris 1966, figs. 50, 131, 144.
84 Fernández-Marcos, Los Thaumata de Sofronio, 260–262, specially 261 (in Greek); Gascou, Sophrone de Jerusalem, 49–52, specially 51 (in French, with an extensive scientific apparatus), it is the description of miracle 10, chapter 6.
85 For the words about the cupboard, cf. Deubner, Kosmas und Damian, 174; Rupprecht, Cosmas et Damiani, 79 (that part of the text is very damaged); A. J. Festugière, Sainte Thècle, saints Côme et Damien, saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), saint George. Collections grecques de miracles, Paris 1971, 171, for that medicine cabinet, cf. B. Caseau, Parfum et guérison dans le christianisme ancien et byzantin: des huiles parfumées des médecins au myron des saints byzantins, in: Les pères de l’église face à la science médicale de leur temps, ed. V. Boudon-Millot, P. Pouderon, Paris 2005, 173. The time of origin of the fourth and fifth groups of miracles has not been established. The third group is dated to the end of the sixth or the beginning of the seventh century, and the sixth one in the period after 1305/6. Timothy Miller brings the cabinet into connection with information on the duties of pharmacists – to take care and to keep (φιλακή) the drugs in the hospital or to sell medicines or aromatic spices mixed with remedies – mentioned, as an appendix at the end of the eleventh century, in Basilika, the reorganisation of Justinian’s law in the ninth century, T. S. Miller, Hospital dreams in Byzantium, in: Dreams, healing, and medicine in Greece from antiquity to the present, ed. S. M. Oberhelman, Farnham 2013, 201–202, 212, on Basilika, Basilika, in: ODB I, 265–266 (A. Schminck; A. Kazhdan). However, we tend to look the cabinet for medical equipment as usual and necessary in doctors’ premises.
The representation of doctors sitting, and medicine cupboards as the hallmark of the premises in which they worked, remained in the miniatures in much later Byzantine books. The manuscript *Paris B. N. gr. 2243* was written for the physician Demetrios Chloros by Cosmas Kamelos, a priest and exarch of the metropolis of Athens, who completed it in August 1339. It is a transcription of the collection of pharmaceutical recipes attributed to Nicholas Myrepos, who originated from Alexandria, and who was mentioned in 1241 as the chief physician at the court of the Nicaean Emperor John III Doukas Vatatzes (1222–1254). Fol. 10v is occupied by a full-page miniature, painted on the model of an earlier one from the thirteenth century. In the upper part is a Deesis with two angels. The lower zone shows a physician (ὁ ἰητρος), sitting on a large decorated chair and holding a long-necked bottle, and, facing him, a patient (ὁ ὀφθαλμου), a pharmacist or doctor's assistant, a woman sitting with a child in her arms, a pharmacologist (ὁ σεπταλος) and his assistant. That the scene is set in a room is indicated by a three-storey set of shelves with boxes and bottles with healing substances behind the pharmacist's assistant. In the manuscript kept in Oxford, *Ms Barocci 87*, on fol. 33v is a miniature with the representation of John Argyropoulos. He studied letters and medicine at the University of Padua from 1441 to 1443. Then he returned to Constantinople, teaching until 1448 in the Mouseion of the Xenon of the Kral, the hospital founded by Serbian King Milutin in the monastery of Saint John the Forerunner in the district of Petra. After the fall of the Byzantine capital, he fled to the Apennine Peninsula. He settled in Florence in 1456 and moved to Rome in 1471, where he died in 1487. In the miniature, Argyropoulos is sitting on a spacious chair. In his right hand, he is holding a rod and with the index finger of his left hand he is pointing to the lines in a book on a lectern resting on a low table that has a shelf, on which there is a box with one elongated and two circular openings on the top and, beside it, a long-necked bottle. Behind him in the painting is architectural scenery. The scene is accompanied by several inscriptions. They say that John Argyropoulos is teaching his disciples in the *Xenon of the Kral* and they cite their names.87

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87 *Vikan, Art, medicine, and magic, 66, n. 3; Byzance. L'art byzantin dans les collections publiques françaises, Paris 1992, 454–455, no. 350 (B. Mondrain, points to an almost identical miniature in a slightly older manuscript); Byzantium: faith and power (1261–1557), ed. H. C. Evans, New York 2004, 526, no. 316 (R. S. Nelson); Parani, Representations of glass objects, 160, fig. 13; S. Lazaris, Scientific, medical and technical manuscripts, in: *A companion to Byzantine illustrated manuscripts*, ed. V. Tsimakida, Leiden–Boston 2017, 104–105, Fig. 32, Stavros Lazaris, referring to the study of Brigitte Mondrain which was inaccessible to us, points to the illuminated manuscript from the thirteenth century, *Vat. Pal. gr. 199*, which contains various medical treatises and in fol. 190v has an almost identical representation in two zones (the differences in the lower scene are very few – the placement of the containers in the medical cabinet and the inscription μαθητής over the assistant blending drugs), so the miniature was certainly a model for the one in the manuscript in Paris, *ibid.*

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88 *Savage-Smith, Hellenistic and Byzantine ophthalmology, 178, Bliquez, Two lists, 187; Aetios of Amida, in: ODB I, 30–31 (J. Scarborough).*

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89 *Savage-Smith, Hellenistic and Byzantine ophthalmology, 181, Bliquez, Two lists, 187, 190–191, Lawrence Bliquez notes that Paul of Aegina described more than 120 operations in the sixth book, and that his work was unsurpassed compared to the texts of later writers from the period from the tenth to the fourteenth century; Paul of Aegina, in: ODB III, 1607–1608 (J. Scarborough, A.-M. Talbot). Hamarneh, Amin Awad, Medical instruments, 177, Sami Hamarneh and Henri Amin Awad referred to the great influence of his writings (already translated by the Arab scholar al-Ibadi, Hunayn ibn Ishaq al-Ibadi, 809–873), especially on Albucasis. On Alexandria as a major centre for the study of medicine, the city hospital and the association of medical assistants, recorded at the beginning of the seventh century, T. S. Miller, The birth
Invasive methods in the treatment of frequent eye diseases, as far as is known, were performed in order to help patients suffering from cataract, pterygium, or trachoma. The operation of a cataract (ὑπόχυμα), opacity of the eye lens, is described in detail by Paul of Aegina, relying on Galen. The procedure does not differ from the one practised by his predecessors. Even the doctors of ancient times tried to remove it by coughing it with a round-tipped needle. The doctor introduced the needle into the eye from a previously designated spot on the side, and moved it deeper by rotating and pushing firmly until it reached an empty space. Then he raised the needle to the apex of the cataract and pushed it downwards, lowering the cloudy lens into the vitreous body. Therefore, even after a successful operation, the patient had blurred vision. Pterygium (πτερύγιον) is an ingrowth of triangular shape resembling a wing, which is why it has that name. It appears on the conjunctiva, on one side of the cornea, frequently the nasal one. In ancient and medieval writings it is almost regularly described as a small, sinewy membrane starting from an angle of the eye, usually from the nasal one, sometimes spreading until it covers the pupil. Aetios of Amida recommends, like some ancient writers, i.e. Celsus, that a hook be penetrated into the middle of the growth so as not to detach the epithelium of the corneal epithelium, then to insert a hair from a horse's mane and a linen thread into a needle and to pull it through the raised pterygium. The doctor then takes the hair and the thread in both hands and moves them under the pterygium to separate the growth from what is beneath it, starting from the cornea and advancing towards the canthus. Once the pterygium is separated from the cornea by the hair and the thread, the place in the corner of the eye where it was attached should be cut off with a 'pterygium knife'. The same procedure was put forward by Paul of Aegina, but he clarifies that the linen thread inserted in the needle penetrates through the middle of the pterygium and raises it upwards, while the horse's hair separates and saws it from the pupil to the canthus, and that its root should be cut with a scalpel carefully so as to preserve the natural tissue of the canthus, and prevent the running of the eye after the removal of the growth. Trachoma (τράχωμα) is an infectious disease of the conjunctiva. Lumps appear on the inner surface of the eyelids. They are thick and hard, and, as the name of the disease testifies, very rough. The affliction is caused by bacteria (chlamydia trachomatis) and, if left untreated, may result in many complications and acute pathological conditions. Byzantine doctors thought that it consisted of four stages and considered it a disease of the eyelids. Aetios of Amida, relying on a lost manual written by Severus, a doctor and ophthalmologist at the time of Octavian Augustus, distinguished four stages in the development of the disease. He pointed out, referring to Severus, that some doctors tried to shave off the roughness with a knife or with fig leaves and warned that this was harmful. Paul of Aegina wrote that trachoma was the roughness of the inner surface of the eyelids. The advanced form resembles incisions and is therefore said to be like a fig, while the chronic stage is when callouses appear with hard thickenings. He briefly advised that, if the eyelid has callouses and is hard, the eyelid must be rubbed with a pumice stone or cuttlefish bone or a fig leaf or an instrument named a 'curette for eyelids' (βλεφαρόκοτον).
Both Aetios of Amida and Paul of Aegina spent a short or long while in Alexandria. They were certainly aware of the afflictions inhabitants of the Nile valley suffered from. However, our knowledge of eye diseases and their treatments in pre-Hellenistic Egypt is rather modest. Despite the fact that some written sources have been preserved, researchers do not agree on which diseases to recognise in the names of certain afflictions. In general, local inhabitants suffered from numerous eye maladies and certainly from cataracts, pterygium and trachoma, also known as Egyptian eye disease, still a very common and serious problem in Egypt. After all, the make-up the ancient Egyptians used to apply on their eyes did not serve for embellishment alone. Judging by the fact that it contained ingredients with antibiotic properties, it had a medical purpose.

On the other hand, to learn about the treatment of eye diseases in Egypt in the times that are of interest in this study, it is important to know about the numerous surgical instruments found in Fustat, nowadays a quarter of Cairo, founded in 641 AD as a military settlement in the place formerly known as Babylon. They come from the collection of Dr. Henri Amin Awad. He came into possession of the items after opening a private clinic in the Fustat quarter in 1950. He did not charge poor patients medical fees, but received from them antiques of no market value. In an effort to understand the purpose of these items, he studied and graduated in Islamic archeology during the 1960s. Over time he donated numerous antiques from his collection to various institutions. It is not possible to accurately determine the time when those objects found in Fustat were made. Firstly, the assumption was that they were Byzantine. Later, it was assumed that they were produced either in the late Umayyad or early Abbasid period, at the end of the eighth or the beginning of ninth century, that they clearly demonstrated the skills of Coptic craftsmanship, and, therefore, that the traditions of surgical knowledge developed by the Copts may subsequently have continued among the inhabitants of the Nile valley. Some instruments used for eye operations were mentioned in Byzantine writings, but since they were not accompanied by illustrations, their shapes cannot reliably be determined.

On the other hand, the already mentioned famous Arab physician and surgeon, known in Europe as Alhhas or Albus, compiled a medical treatise in Cordoba, the capital of the Muslim Andalusia, around 1000. Its thirtieth and final book was dedicated to surgery. More than 150 operating devices were metodicised by the Copts may subsequently have continued among the inhabitants of the Nile valley. Some instruments used for eye operations were mentioned in Byzantine writings, but since they were not accompanied by illustrations, their shapes cannot reliably be determined.

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ously described and illustrated in it, and the examples closely resembling those found in Fustat can be seen among them (Figs. 7–8). In the Fustat finds one can also recognize analogies of the knife held by Saint Colluthos in the scene in the church of the Monastery of the Syrians. The blade represented in the fresco is similar to that of one that was identified, thanks to the illustrations in Albucasis’ book, as a scalpel with a single cutting edge and a sharp tip for cutting the conjunctiva (Fig. 9). The handle resembles that of an instrument, probably a probe, finely decorated with incised lines and circles and with a cross-shaped tip (Fig. 10). Finally, an identical ending of the handle can be seen in the scalpel in the right hand of Saint Panteleimon on the ninth or tenth century icon from Sinai, brought by Porphyrius Uspeisky to Kiev, where it is now kept.

* * *

The painter of the scene in the church of the Monastery of the Syrians was obviously familiar with the appearance of surgical instruments. He could have seen them if he had been watching an eye operation in the nearby cities of Alexandria or Fustat, or perhaps even in the desert. The cataract operation was performed by punching, using a needle with a round tip, the pterygium was removed with a linen thread and a horse’s hair and the root was cut off with a scalpel, while the trachoma was scraped with a pumice stone, cuttlefish bone, fig leaves or a ‘curette for eyelids’, probably a probe with a roughened terminus. The one only of these procedures in which the scalpel for a conjuctiva was used is the one for the removal of a pterygium. However, if the painter had the task of representing that operation, he would certainly have shown the longer and more recognisable part of the process, the one that was done with the linen thread and the horse’s hair. One may conclude that, in all likelihood, he had no intention of representing a specific surgical intervention on the eye.

101 Hamarneh, Amin Awad, Medical instruments, 176. For Albucasis’ writings we have to rely on the old edition of the French translation by Lucien Leclerc, followed by the drawings made on the basis of miniatures and not by the photos of the ancient illustrations, L. Leclerc, La chirurgie d’Abulcasis, Paris 1861. A newer book, with an English translation, was not available, M. S. Spink, G. I. Lewis, Albucasis on surgery and instruments, London 1973.

102 Leclerc, La chirurgie d’Abulcasis, 82–83, T. V.43–44, explanations as well as illustrations of two knives for the cutting of a pterygium, on the basis of which the two drawings for this study were made, cf. Hamarneh, Amin Awad, Medical instruments, 177.

103 Cf. ibid., Fig. 2, no. 15. Based on that illustration of very small dimensions the drawing was made for this study.

104 Bliquez, Two lists, 189, he points out that many surgical instruments found in Fustat are finely decorated with incised lines and circles and have tips in the form of a bird or a cross. Under number 1, he refers to a probe (?) with the handle decorated with circles and with a cross on the top. A rather poor photo of it has been published. It was the basis for making the drawing given in this study (cf. ibid., fig. 8). Bliquez notes that a probe with a handle with a cross-shaped tip can be seen in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo.


There are no traces left of the letters in the inscription accompanying the scene in the church of the Monastery of the Syrians. Therefore, it is not known whether the painter had the task of depicting Saint Colluthos as a holy healer of people afflicted with eye diseases, in an unusual manner, or whether he was confronted with the unusual task of showing him literally performing a surgical operation to treat an eye disease. The painter relied on various models – the pagan artistic traditions and the Christian iconographic patterns and introduced details of everyday life. One can recognize older pagan traditions of portraying the holy physician sitting, modeled on ancient representations of doctors. There are few Christian iconographic elements. They are reflected merely in the position of the depicted figures, with the principal character being designated by a halo and in a visibly higher position than the other participants in the scene, and being located on the left side of the setting. On the other hand, one is unable to reliably establish whether the appearance of the medical cupboard and the shape and decoration of the stool convey that of ancient or contemporary cabinets and chairs. The shape of the blade and handle of the surgical knife is certainly derived from everyday life. The meaning of the young man without a halo, standing in the background in the upper western corner of the scene, remains an open question. He is naked from the waist up and one cannot distinguish whether he is holding something in his right hand. He could be the saint’s servant or assistant, a patient waiting to be healed, a witness to the event happening in the foreground, and one should not even exclude the possibility that he represented an allegorical figure, reminiscent of personifications in pagan art works.

Despite the fact that the scene in the church in the Monastery of the Syrians is unique among the preserved old paintings, one should not rule out that it was done on the model of an earlier representation, perhaps one that existed in the centre of the cult of Saint Colluthos in his miraculous shrine in Antinoe. Whether it is an original achievement or the echo of an ancient image, its painter subtly intertwined details taken from various sources and managed to create a scene that even now, despite severe damage, introduces the viewer to a world in which ancient traditions, Christian models and details from everyday life are interwoven.
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Између иконографских образаца и мотива из свакодневног живота. Слика операције ока који врши свети Колутос

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У Богородичиној цркви манастира Сиријаца у Скитској пустињи откривене су фреске које потичу из четири слоја живописа. У средњем делу јужног зида хоре, у зони изнад сокла, налази се група светица, јединствена међу очуваним призорима које потичу из античког доба. Дом може се закључити да у призору у цркви манастира Сиријаца, смештен креденац за медицинску опрему. Могуће је да је тиме наговештен значај позива светитеља, јер су лекари, засигурно још од позног антиког доба, обично седели а пацијент стоји, што, наравно, није било обичај. Могуће је да је тиме наговештен важан симво са свакодневне друштвене опреме.

Након ипшчитавања прича, забележених у про- славним саставима посвећеним светом Колутосу, о излечењима особа које су имале проблема са ви- dom може се закључити да у призору у цркви манастира Сиријаца није приказано ниједно од описаних чуда. Живописац је могао да зна како су операције излечењима особа које су имале проблема са ви- dom. Могуће је да је тиме наговештен значај позива светитеља, јер су лекари, засигурно још од позног антиког доба, обично седели а пацијент стоји, што, наравно, није било обичај. Могуће је да је тиме наговештен важан символ са свакодневне друштвене опреме.

Свети Колутос се у цркви манастира Сиријаца обично сла- ви у дан његовог јубилеја, према византијском календару, одговоаран 20. мају. Њиме је било посвећено више прелазних списа, од којих су се сачували два страдања, две похвале, зборници чуда, као и састав у синаксару коптске цркве. Упркос фрескама другог слоја, за које је утврђено да су израђене око 800. године, у време док се у манастиру већином живели коптски монаси. На- ведена сцена, јединствена међу очуваним призорима које изгледале. Извори сведоче о томе да су се оне врши- ли пред људима који би се окупили да их посматрају. Пред тога, већ је почетком V века забележено да су у Скитској пустињи живели лекари. Међутим, на слици документује се иако је некада покрај њих, као и на сцени у цркви манастира Сиријаца, смештен креденац за медицинску опрему.

Крсто седи, а пацијент стоји, што, наравно, није било обичај. Могуће је да је тиме наговештен значај позива светитеља, јер су лекари, засигурно још од позног антиког доба, обично седели а пацијент стоји, што, наравно, није било обичај. Могуће је да је тиме наговештен важан символ са свакодневне друштвене опреме.
Поставља се и питање о томе да ли се може претпоставити коју болест отклања свети на сцени у цркви манастира Сиријца. Стога је пажња посвећена најчешћим обољењима ока отклањаним инвазивним захватима, на основу списка Етија из Амиде (VI век) и, у првом реду, Павла са Егине († после 642), који је и временом и местом живљења најближи нашој слици. То су операције катаракте, птеригијума или трахоме. Катаракта је третирана пробадањем иглом облого врха, птеригијум је одстранјиван уз помоћ ланеног влакна и длаке из коњске гриве и на крају би његов корен био исецан скалпелом, док је трахома стругана пловућим, сипином кости, смоквином листом или „стругачем за капке“. Једино је у захвату за одстранивање птеригијума коришћен скалпел за конјуктиву. Међутим, уколико је живописац имао задатак да га наслика свакако да би приказао дужи и препознатљивији део тог процеса, који се обављао уз помоћ влакна и коњске длаке. Може се закључити да он није имао за циљ да представи неку одређену операцију.

Углавном, зограф је следио паганске уметничке основе и хришћанске иконографске обрасце и унела појединости из свакодневног живота. Паганске традиције препознају се у приказу светог лекара по узору на древне представе доктора. Хришћанске иконографске основе огледају се само у поставци представљених особа у оквиру сцене. Из свакодневног живота потиче облик сечива и дршке ножића за операције. Најзад, није могуће поуздано установити да ли обличја токарене столице и ормарића преносе изглед старих или оноврених седишта и крепеница за медицинску опрему.