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Egyptian papyrus found in binding of codex discovered in ancient Irish bog

Irish scientists have found fragments of Egyptian papyrus in the leather cover of an ancient book of psalms that was unearthed from a peat bog. The papyrus in the lining of the Egyptian-style leather cover of the 1,200-year-old manuscript, "potentially represents the first tangible connection between early Irish Christianity and the Middle Eastern Coptic Church," scholars at the Ireland National Museum said. "It is a finding that asks many questions and has confounded some of the accepted theories about the history of early Christianity in Ireland."

Ragnall O Floinn, head of collections at the Museum, said the 8th-century manuscript, now known as the *Faddan More Psalter*, was one of the top ten archaeological discoveries in Ireland. It was uncovered four years ago by a man using a mechanical digger to harvest peat near Birr in County Tipperary, but analysis has only just been completed.

The experts believe the manuscript of the psalms was produced in an Irish monastery and it was later put in the leather cover which came from Egypt. "The question is whether the papyrus came with the cover or if it was added. It is possible that the imperfections in the hide may allow us to confirm the leather is Egyptian. The cover could have had several lives before it ended up basically as a folder for the manuscript in the bog," O Floinn said. "It could have travelled from a library somewhere in Egypt to the Holy Land or to Constantinople or Rome and then to Ireland."



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