

## **ABUSIR AL-MALAAQ**

A town located between the Nile and the Fayyum in the province of Bani Suef. It was known in Greek as Busiris and in earlier Arabic literature as Busir Quridis (M. Ramzi, 1960).

As evidenced by archaeological finds from the earliest period of Egyptian history, Abusir al-Malaq has a very long history. It is likely that the story in the *Chronicle of JOHN OF NIKIOU* about the founding of a town called Busiris is about Abusir al-Malaz. The tale states that a certain Mantunawis who was a devotee of Ayqasbera (Osiris?), the same who is known as Dionysus in Upper and Lower Egypt, established a city called Busiris (1883, pp. 224-45). Abusir al-Malaq is mentioned in Greek papyri from as early as the third century B.C. to as late as the sixth century A.D.

In the Arabic period, the name of Abusir al-Malaq first arises in connection with the death of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan ibn Muhammad al-Ja'di (744-751). Though the accounts of his demise differ, many of them relate that he died in a monastery and some say this monastery was near Abusir al-Malaq. Even today a tombstone near the town is said to be that of Marwan. In one place ABU SALIH THE ARMENIAN says Marwan died in Abusir near al-ASHMUNAYN, but elsewhere he places Marwan's death in the area of Abusir al-Malaq (Busir Quridis) and goes on to state that a church of the Virgin Mary and a monastery called Abirun were located there. It was in this monastery that Marwan actually died. In no other sources do we find references to a church or a monastery near Abusir al-Malaq, but it is possible that DAYR AL-HAMMAN, located about 5 miles (8 km) north of al-Lahun, is the monastery mentioned in the sources that say Marwan died in a monastery in or near Abusir al-Malaq.

There is today a Coptic church of uncertain age in Abusir al-Malaq.

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