

[ASYUT](#)

A city on the west bank of the Nile in middle Egypt. The Greeks called the city *lÚkwn pÒlij*, Lúkon pólis (Lycopolis, “wolf city”) because of the citizens’ reverence for Wepwawet, the wolf god. Asyut, the city’s modern Arabic name, is derived from the Coptic *cioout*.

Lycopolis, home of a Christian community since at least as early as the [great persecution](#) of DIOCLETIAN at the beginning of the fourth century, became one of the most important centers of Christianity in [Egypt](#) during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The SYNAXARION for 1 Amshir relates that Bishop Apadion from Antinoë (ANTINOOPOLIS) found a group of Christians in Lycopolis when he visited the city at the beginning of the fourth century. The persecutions themselves reached the city in the person of ARIANUS, who condemned and martyred many Christians in Lycopolis, among them Saint Thecla (Till, 1935-1936, Vol. 1, p. 116; Vol. 2, p. 131). The martyr Phoibammon was also killed in Lycopolis, and later a church was raised there as a memorial to him.

Saint VICTOR OF SHU was born in Asyut, and Saint Claudius of Antioch was buried not far from the city. The most celebrated ascetic associated with the city was JOHN OF LYCOPOLIS, who lived in the fourth century in a cave some five miles from Lycopolis (*Historia Monachorum* 1.6). In the fourteenth century, when the Arabic Synaxarion was written, there were two churches in the vicinity of John’s cave, a church of John himself and a church of the archangel Michael.

Among the early bishops of Lycopolis were ALEXANDER, Apollonius, and MELITIUS. [Alexander](#) was a Neoplatonist philosopher who converted to Christianity and was said by Photius of Constantinople to have become bishop of Lycopolis (*Contra Manichaeos* 1.11). Apollonius apostatized in the persecutions of 304-305, and Melitius became well known as the leader of a schismatic group that [ordained](#) its own bishops in many cities and towns in Egypt. In 325 Bishop Plusanius of Lycopolis attended the

Council of NICAEA. Eudaimon succeeded him in the office sometime around 347 (Munier, 1943, pp. 5, 10). One of the most important bishops of Lycopolis was CONSTANTINE, who was ordained by Patriarch DAMIAN (569-605). Constantine was an author of Coptic panegyrics, some of which are also preserved in Arabic translation (for a list of his works, see Garitte, 1950, pp. 278-304).

For several centuries after the ARAB CONQUEST OF [EGYPT](#) in 641 there are no records of bishops in Lycopolis/Asyut. Then a colophon in a manuscript from DAYR ANBA SAWIRUS in Jabal Rifa dated 1003 mentions a bishop Gregory of Asyut (Crum, 1915, pp. 47, 104-105). The HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS relates

that some time later Patriarch SHENUTE II (1032-1046) [ordained](#) the archpriest Apater (Badir) as bishop of Asyut, but Apater was not accepted by the people for three years because he had paid Shenute to perform the ordination. Bishop Antony of [Asyut](#) attended the synod in Cairo in 1086 (Munier, 1943, p. 29). An inscription in DAYR ANBA SHINUDAH near Suhaj indicates that Christodoulos was bishop in Asyut around 1237 (Crum, 1904, p. 558). According to Munier (1943, p. 31), in 1240 Christodoulos signed the canons of Patriarch [CYRIL III IBN LAQLAQ](#) (1235-1243). At the

consecration of the holy chrism in 1308 Bishop Severus of [Asyut](#) was present, and Bishop Philotheus of Asyut attended the same event around 1330 (Munier, 1943, pp. 38, 40). Philotheus was bishop until at least 1362, at which time he signed a document of appointment (Crum, 1909, no. 909). When [J. VANSLEB](#) visited [Egypt](#) in 1672 he met with John, who was bishop of ASYUT, NAQADAH, JIRJA, and ABU TIJ (Vansleb, 1678, pp. 218-219,

227). This John was present at the preparation of the chrism in 1703 as the bishop of [Asyut](#) and Manfalut (Munier, 1943, p. 42). In 1794 a manuscript was dedicated to Bishop Michael of Asyut (Graf, 1934, no.

387). Through their writings we know also of Paul, who was bishop of Asyut, Abu Tij, and Manfalut, and of YUHANNIS, BISHOP OF ASYUT, though there is no record of when they were in office. Paul was the author of martyrdoms (Graf, 1944-1953, Vol. 1, p. 532; Vol. 2, pp. 505-6) and Yuhannis is known as the compiler of the accounts of Saint Dilagi and the martyrs of Isna (Graf, 1944-1953, Vol. 1, p. 536).

As one would expect in a place with a long and rich tradition of Christianity, there are a number of churches and [monasteries](#) in and around Asyut. For detailed information about these sites, see the articles on DAYR ABU BIFAM (Asyut), DAYR ABU ISHAQ (Abnub-Asyut), DAYR ABU MAQRUFAH, DAYR ABU MUSHA, DAYR AL-'ADHRA (Abnub-Asyut), DAYR AL-AWANAH, DAYR AL-BALAYZAH, DAYR AL-'IZAM, DAYR AL-JABRAWI, DAYR AL-MALAK MIKHA'IL (Rayramum Asyut), Dayr al-Muharraq, DAYR AL-MUTTIN, DAYR AL-NASARA

(southeast of Asyut), DAYR BUQTUR OF SHU, DAYR DURUNKAH, DAYR HARMINA, DAYR RIFAH, DAYR TASA, and [MONASTERIES](#) OF THE MIDDLE SA'ID.

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