

## **BASTAH**

A city located in the Eastern Delta just south of al-Zaqaziq in the province of Sharqiyyah. In Egyptian the city was known as Per-Bastet (the domain of Bastet, the lion goddess).

A powerful political center, Bastah provided the kings of the Twenty-second Dynasty (945-712 B.C.) and served as the capital of the eighteenth Lower Egyptian nome during the Late Period (712- 332 B.C.). The Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the fifth century, knew the city as Boubastis and referred to it often, describing its temples and other sights. At the location of the ancient Egyptian settlement, excavators have uncovered temples of Bastet, Keti, Hori, Pepy, Atum, and Mihos, as well as tombs and cat cemeteries.

Coptic sources, which give the name of the city as Bouasti or Pouasti, record a long Christian tradition for the place. Athanasius mentions that the city had a Melitian bishop as early as A.D. 325 (*Apologia Secunda* II.71, in *Athanasius Werke*, Vol. 2, p. 150). Other sources speak of orthodox [bishops](#) in this early period also (see Timm, 1984, p. 363).

Bastah is mentioned often in accounts of martyrs from the period before 640. The martyr Shenute, who was imprisoned in Antinoopolis, came from Bastah (Hyvernats, 1886-1887, p. 100). Apa Apoli was put to death there during the governorship of Ptolemaios (see Evelyn-White, 1926, pp. 87-93).

Given the area's Christian tradition it is surprising that Bastah does not appear in the medieval Coptic-Arabic scales, but the city is included in a medieval list of Egyptian bishoprics (Munier, 1943, pp. 47-54), and various [bishops](#) of Bastah are attested. Bishop Pahom from Bastah was present at the conflict between Patriarch YUSAB I (830-849) and Muhammad [ibn 'Abd](#) Allah, where he took sides against the patriarch. In 1078, Bishop Gabriel of Bastah attended the synod at DAYR ANBA

MAQAR in Wadi al-Natrun where CYRIL II (1078-1092) was selected as the sixty-seventh patriarch (Munier, 1943, p. 26). One of the three [bishops](#) who ordained John as [bishop of Cairo](#) in 1118 was John “bishop of al- Khandaq,” and the see of Bastah assisted Patriarch MARK III (1167-1189) and Bishop John of Tamwayh in the dedication of a church in al-Basatin.

Coptic tradition holds that Bastah was the first stopping place in Egypt of the family of Jesus on the FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. When the inhabitants of Bastah would not receive Jesus and Mary, they pitched their tent outside the city, where a spring was made to flow for them. Later the people of Bastah revered this spot. A church dedicated to the Virgin [Mary](#) was built on the site in 1185.

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