

## **DAYR ABU MUSA (Misas)**

The Coptic texts of [MOSES](#) OF [ABYDOS](#) give us some information about his monastery. [Moses](#) established himself first of all in proximity to the temples of Abydos, at a place called Pehke; then he went off toward the south wishing to escape the importuning crowds attracted by his miracles. But he was arrested by a vision and constrained to return north; he halted a mile from Pehke, and there, it seems, founded his monastery. Like PACHOMIUS, he began by constructing an enclosure wall and then two wells, one of them for passing strangers.

It is said that he founded a community of women, and [archaeologists](#) have discovered in the temple of Seti I some graffiti that show that a community of women lived there, the most recent of them going back to the tenth century (Crum, in Murray, 1904, pp. 38-43).

[ABU SALIH](#) THE ARMENIAN, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, wrote of the monastery of [Moses](#) but called it that of Bani Musa, which is no doubt a fault of his source or of the copyists (1895, pp. 231-32). He noted that the monastery was restored by its abbot al-Safi, who surrounded it with an enclosing wall; that it was provided with a *saqyah* (waterwheel); and finally that the body of the saint was there. [Abu Salih](#) knew that the real titular saint was Moses, but he did not indicate the precise site of the monastery; he contented himself with saying “to the west of the Nile,” which is vague.

[Abu Salih](#) related to this monastery a miracle that occurred under the patriarch CHRISTODOULUS. The columns of the church oozed, thus announcing a famine. But the HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS relates this event to the monastery of [MOSES](#) THE BLACK in Wadi al-Natron, not to that of Moses of Abydos (1959, Vol. 2, pt. 3, pp. 189-90 [text], 289-90 [trans.]).

Al-MAQRIZI (1853, Vol. 2, p. 507) made reference to a monastery in this region in his list of the monasteries of Egypt but called it that of Bu Misas or Bu Misis (Moses). He added but little, saying that it was a large monastery and that [Moses](#) was a native of al-Balyana, which links up with the prophecy of SHENUTE attributed to him by the author of the Coptic life.

It was not until 1718 that a traveler, C. SICARD, mentioned the monasteries of Abydos. He names three: one to the south of the Memnonion, of which he mentions the enclosure wall and the waterwheel ([Abu Salih's saqyah](#)) but which he calls that of Pachomius; one which he calls that "of the abbot Moses, to the west of the village, at the foot of Mt. Afodos," which is the present Dayr Musa, also called DAYR SITT DIMYANAH; and one to the south of that of the abbot Moses, but entirely in ruins (1982, Vol. 3, pp. 65-68). There is some chance that the first is the one that [Moses](#) founded at Abydos. In 1731 the traveler [Granger](#) spoke of Abydos, but not of the Monastery of Moses (1845, pp. 38-39).

In the early twentieth century Lefebvre spoke of "a long quadrilateral of which only the walls of unbaked brick emerge" and noted that the inhabitants call it the "Monastery of the Greeks" (1911, Vol. 4, p. 239).

The modern description of the monastery that bears the name of [Moses](#) and of Sitt Dimyanah to the northwest of Shunat al-Zabib is given by O. Meinardus (1965, p. 302; 1977, pp. 413-14).

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