

DAYR AL-'ADHRA' (Akhmim)

One of a group of three small monasteries near the [village](#) of al-Hawawish, to the northeast of AKHMIM on the edge of the desert. This village is situated about 3 miles (5 km) from Akhmim. About a mile from the village is the Monastery of the Martyrs (DAYR AL-SHUHADA). Dayr al-'Adhra' is to be found about half a mile to the south of this monastery. It is not known to ancient writers or travelers. A [description](#) is given by Meinardus (1965, pp. 297-98; 1977, pp. 409-410).

The enclosure wall has semicircular buttresses on its eastern and western sides. The church is built by the south and east walls. North and west of the church are a number of monastic buildings, including quarters for monks and visitors, as well as work and storage areas. The church is a late-medieval hall church (*Hallenkirche*) with columns. Rectangular corner chambers flank three sanctuaries. The western part of the church is five bays wide and two bays deep. The bays are divided by columns and are domed. The dome over the bay in front of the central sanctuary rests on squinches; the others rest on pendentives. Additional chapels have been added to the north side. The church belongs to a local group marked by two peculiarities.

One is that the deep sanctuaries have straight sides leading to semicircular ends. Other examples with this feature are the two churches of ABU SAYFAYN, and Sitt [Dimyanah](#) in the town of Akhmim (probably dating to the sixteenth century), as well as the church of DAYR MAR [JIRJIS](#) AL-HADIDI. The second peculiarity is the construction of vaulted corridors behind the sanctuaries, also found at DAYR AL-MALAK MIKHA'IL, Sitt Dimyanah, and Dayr Mar Jirjis al-Hadidi. All the original sanctuaries have five niches.

The central sanctuary screen is badly inlaid. The side ones are painted. The church was restored in 1980, and fresh plaster and whitewash

obscure construction details. Before repainting, the brickwork was apparently painted in red-and-black patterns (Clarke, 1912, fig. 31), a type of decoration found also at the above-mentioned churches in and around Akhmim.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Clarke, S. [Christian](#) *Antiquities in the Nile Valley*, pp. 144-45, pl. 42, no. 2. Oxford, 1912.
- Grossmann, P. *Mittelalterliche Langhauskuppelkirchen und verwandte Typen in Oberägypten*, p. 196 et passim. Glückstadt, 1982.
- Meinardus, O. F. A. [Christian](#) *Egypt, Ancient and Modern*. Cairo, 1965; 2nd ed., 1977.
- Timm, S. *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, Vol. 2, pp. 636-37. Wiesbaden, 1984.

SHELA MCNALLY

Tags: [Places](#)