

DAYR AL-AMIR TADRUS (Muna al-Amir)

This monastery bears a portion of the Arabic name of THEODORUS OF SHOTEP, [al-Amir](#) Tadrus al-Shutbi. After Theodorus' martyrdom by fire, his remains were saved at great expense by a rich Christian woman, who transported them to Egypt after the [Edict of Milan](#) in 312 and buried them in a spot where a [church](#) was later built and where in the fourth century Dayr [al-Amir](#) Tadrus was founded at Muna al- Amir around that church.

Situated on the west bank of the Nile, opposite Ma'adi and Ma'sarat Hulwan, this ancient monastery lies in the neighborhood of the modern district of al-Hawamdiyyah, adjacent to the [village](#) of Muna al-Amir.

The area of the monastery is especially fitted for monastic life with its salubrious atmosphere, as well as with the agricultural produce of its arable soil. In reality, a number of other monasteries are known to have emerged in that area on both banks of the Nile. Within a short distance on the west bank to the north arose DAYR APA JEREMIAH at Saqqara. Nearby, DAYR ABU SAYFAYN was founded at another early date, but both seem to have started dwindling in the fourteenth century. On the east bank at a much later date, the laura of Saint [BARSUM](#) THE NAKED (al-'Iryan) came into existence.

It is interesting that [Pope](#) CYRIL V (1874-1927) selected the site of Dayr [al-Amir](#) Tadrus for occasional retirement and established there his summer resort. He was probably attracted to the area not only by its proximity to the patriarchal seat in Cairo but also by the very survival of the [church](#) where such sacred remains were buried.

Originally the monastery occupied an extensive tract surrounded by a massive stone wall. With the gradual encroachment of farmers on its arable soil, the wall disappeared. The archaeological remains have shrunk

to mere fractions of the ancient structures, which include, besides the traces of monastic cells, the great [church](#) at which [Pope](#) Cyril built his summer resort and which became a place of [pilgrimage](#) for pious Copts of that region.

The [church](#) entrance is reached by descending a few steps to about a yard below the actual ground level. Apparently as the silt accumulated through the centuries, it raised the ground level around the church. Inside its sanctuary, the church contains three altars inlaid with mother-of-pearl and embellished by icons of different periods. The ICONOSTASIS is made of artistic arabesque woodwork. Within the sanctuary are the remains of three martyrs, of whom the youngest, Saint Cyriacus, was three years old. The other two famous saints are Saint MERCURIUS (Abu Sayfayn) and Saint THEODORUS ([al-Amir](#) Tadrus), whose feast day is 20 Abib. However, the sanctification of the church itself is celebrated on 20 Hatur. According to al-Makarim, the church was restored by Abu al-Yumn ibn al-Bazzaz, most probably in the course of the twelfth century.

Other visible remains to the west of the [church](#) comprise the cemetery where bishops and monks were buried. To the east of the church is the modern patriarchal summer residence and an ancient well used by the monks in bygone days when the Nile ran low. An inner stone wall, approximately 4 yards high, surrounds these structures.

During the Middle Ages, the eparchy of Muna [al-Amir](#) comprised the adjacent towns north of Memphis to Giza, together with Ma'adi and Turah east of the river. This eparchy is known to have existed for three centuries, until the sixteenth century, when it was incorporated into the more recent eparchy of Awsim, whose seat was consequently moved to the city of Giza, where it has remained to the present day. Evidently all this may be considered an offshoot of the much older Memphytic eparchy of ancient times.

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AZIZ S. ATIYA

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