

DAYR AL-MUHARRAQAH

ABU [SALIH](#) THE ARMENIAN, who wrote in the early thirteenth century, is the only ancient author who mentions Dayr al-Muharraqaḥ. He situated it in Giza near Bunumrus, also known as Abu al-Numrus (Ramzi, 1953-1968, Vol. 2, , p. 3 and p. 39). There is still a village of this name to the south of the pyramid of Licht.

It is clear that the tradition at a very early date fixed the FLIGHT INTO EGYPT at al-Ashmunayn: “We have seen also another holy man of the name of Apollo, in the borders of Hermopolis in the Thebaid, where the [Saviour](#) went with Mary and Joseph ... we have seen there the temple where, when the Saviour entered the town, all the idols fell down with their faces to the ground” (Festugière, 1971, p. 47). The fifth-century Greek historian Sozomen, in his [Ecclesiastical History](#) (5, 21), also spoke of Hermopolis in the Thebaid and of the miracle of the idols.

The Coptic story of the martyrdom of Saints PAESE AND TECLA makes Mary say, “I stayed in the town of Shmun, I and my small child sucking my breast.” (The manuscript in the Pierpont [Morgan Library](#) in New York, deriving from al-Hamuli in the Fayyum, dates from 861; cf. Reymond and Barns, 1973, pp. 57 [text], 167 [trans].)

Prev
1of88
Next

Other more recent texts report the same tradition: the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, chapter 25; the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy,

chapters 24-25; and sermons attributed to THEOPHILUS OF [ALEXANDRIA](#) by ZACHARIAS, bishop of Sakha.

In the HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS OF THE EGYPTIAN CHURCH the author Yuhanna ibn Sa'id ibn Yahya ibn Mina, with the surname Ibn al-Qulzumi, who compiled the notices of the patriarchs CYRIL II, MICHAEL IV, and MACARIUS II, provided a list of the places sanctified by the presence of the Holy Family. It is remarkable that he names Qusqam and al-Muharraqah. Hence these two places are different from one another. According to the author, the departure of the Holy Family for Palestine began from al-Muharraqah and took them through Cairo.

The [Coptic SYNAXARION](#) mentions the return from al-Ashmunayn via al-Muharraqah and Misr. The Ethiopian Synaxarion follows the Coptic but adds the mention of Dabra Qusqam (Budge, 1928, Vol. 3, p. 925).

It is probable that Dayr al-Muharraqah perpetuates, in the province of Giza, the memory of the passage of the Holy Family.

Fig. 26.1. Qusqam, the archaeological area. Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

Fig. 26.1. Qusqam, the archaeological area. Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

This altar stone of the main altar was previously used as a tombstone for a man named Colluthos in the year 746.

This altar stone of the main altar was previously used as a tombstone for a man named Colluthos in the year 746.

Fig. 26.3. Qusqam, selected ornamental carvings on the outside walls of the keep. Photographs by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

Fig. 26.3. Qusqam, selected ornamental carvings on the outside walls of the keep. Photographs by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

The Ark or Throne of the Chalice (Kursi al-kas). During liturgy, the prepared [chalice](#) is put in the Ark until Holy Communion. The [icon](#) painter A[na]stasi al-Qudsi al-[Rumi](#) decorated the Ark with The Last Supper (photograph), the Virgin and Child and the [archangels](#) Michael and Gabriel (dated am 1581/ad 1864-1865).

The Ark or Throne of the Chalice (Kursi al-kas). During liturgy, the

prepared [chalice](#) is put in the Ark until Holy Communion. The [icon](#) painter A[na]stasi al-Qudsi al-[Rumi](#) decorated the Ark with The Last Supper (photograph), the Virgin and Child and the [archangels](#) Michael and Gabriel (dated am 1581/ad 1864-1865).

Fig. 26.5. Anba Abram, bishop of the Fayoum and Giza (left); St. Hegomen Mikhail al-Buhairi al-Muharraqi (right). Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraqi.

Fig. 26.5. Anba Abram, bishop of the Fayoum and Giza (left); St. Hegomen Mikhail al-Buhairi al-Muharraqi (right). Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraqi.

Fig. 26.4. Qusqam, marble iconostasis of St. George Church. Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

Fig. 26.4. Qusqam, marble iconostasis of St. George Church. Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

The ancient Church of the Virgin Mary, the central altar room.
The ancient Church of the Virgin Mary, the central altar room.

The interior of the keep with the Chapel of the Archangel Michael with a wooden lectern.

The interior of the keep with the Chapel of the Archangel Michael with a wooden lectern.

The main gate of the monastery.
The main gate of the monastery.

Fig. 26.2. Qusqam, two iconostases in the ancient Church of the Holy Virgin Mary. Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraqi.

Fig. 26.2. Qusqam, two iconostases in the ancient Church of the Holy Virgin Mary. Photograph by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraqi.

The interior of the keep with the Chapel of the Archangel Michael with a wooden lectern.

The interior of the keep with the Chapel of the Archangel Michael with a wooden lectern.

Fig. 26.6. Qusqam, selected collection of antiquities. Photographs by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

Fig. 26.6. Qusqam, selected collection of antiquities. Photographs by Fr. Maximous al-Muharraḡi.

The ancient Church of the Virgin Mary, view from the nave to the sanctuary. According to tradition, Christ consecrated the house ivhere

the family lived during their stay in Egypt as a church, the first church in Egypt. The present building most probably dates to the twelfth century. The ancient Church of the Virgin Mary, view from the nave to the sanctuary. According to tradition, Christ consecrated the house ivhere the family lived during their stay in Egypt as a church, the first church in Egypt. The present building most probably dates to the twelfth century.

The Quarry Church of the Virgin.
The Quarry Church of the Virgin.

The reused columns were placed upside down. RIGHT: the well on the ground floor of the keep.

The reused columns were placed upside down. RIGHT: the well on the ground floor of the keep.

Prev

1of29

Next

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Budge, E. A. W. *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*, Vol. 3. Oxford, 1928.
- Ramzi, M. *Al-Qamus al-Jughrafi lil-Bilad al Misriyyah*, 3 vols. Cairo, 1953-1968.
- Reymond, E. A. E., and J. W. B. Barns. *Four Martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codices*. Oxford, 1973.

RENÉ-[GEORGES](#) COQUIN

MAURICE MARTIN, S.J.

Tags: [Places](#)