

DAYR ANBA HADRA.

History

This monastery, although uninhabited since the twelfth century, is fairly well preserved and has aroused the enthusiasm of archaeologists.

It raises its imposing silhouette on the left bank of the [Nile](#) at a latitude south of the island of Elephantine. It is above the mausoleum of the Aga Khan, the religious head of the Isma'ili sect, who died in 1957. The monastery was built in the seventh century, then rebuilt in the tenth, and destroyed in the twelfth century. The funerary stelae date from the sixth to the ninth centuries. It is said to have been founded to commemorate a holy recluse, Anba Hadra, who is celebrated on 12 Kiyahk and whose life is summarized in the Synaxarion of the [Copts](#) from Upper Egypt. He became bishop of Aswan in the time of the patriarch THEOPHILUS (385-412). Later the monastery was given the name of a local saint, Simeon. All travelers and archaeologists cite it under this name, but the Coptic sources always call it Anba Hadra.

Apart from the Synaxarion, which probably summarizes an older Coptic text, the most ancient witness appears to have been ABU SALIH (see Abu al-Makarim), at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Abu Salih spoke of it twice, the first time to tell of a church dedicated to Anba Hadra then on an island in the [Nile](#) and destroyed in his time. A little later he spoke of a monastery of this name that was on the left bank and was still occupied by monks. No doubt, he was speaking of two different sites or perhaps working from two sources, which he did not fully coordinate.

From the eighteenth century on, it was mentioned by travelers, E. F. Jomard (1809-1822, Vol. 1, p. 144) spoke of it, and M. Jullien (1903, pp. 283-84) noted it. Johann Georg (1913, pp. 60-67; 1930, p. 48) showed his interest in it and G. Maspero (1910, p. 193) paused there.

Unfortunately, the frescoes have not been systematically photographed. There remain only a *maestas domini* (representation of Christ in majesty) and a fresco. This is the more regrettable in that today these paintings are almost invisible.

Happily the funerary stelae have been published several times, notably by U. Bouriant (1884, pp. 62-70) and J. Clédât (1908, pp. 224-29). They were conveniently brought together by H. Munier (1930-1931).

A Greek graffito attributed to a Nubian scribe is given by Griffith (1913, pp. 57-58).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bock, W. de. *Matériaux pour servir à l'archéologie chrétienne de l'Égypte*. St. Petersburg, 1901.
- Bouriant, U. "Notice des monuments coptes du musée de Boulaq." *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptienne et assyrienne* 5 (1884):60-70.
- . "Notes de voyage, 19, le Deir amba Samaan en face d'Assouan." *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptienne et assyrienne* 15 (1893):176-89.
- Budge, E. A. W. "Excavations made at Aswan, by Major-General Sir F. Grenfell During the Years 1885 and 1886." *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 10 (1887-1888):4-40.
- Clédât, J. "Notes d'archéologie copte: Assouan." *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 9 (1908):224-29.
- Daressy, G. "Renseignements sur la provenance des stèles coptes du Musée du Caire." *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 13 (1914):266-71.
- Denon, V. *Voyage dans la Haute et la Basse Égypte pendant les campagnes du général Bonaparte*, 2 vols. Paris, 1802.
- Griffith, F. L. *The Nubian Texts of the Christian Period*. Berlin, 1913.
- Johann Georg, Duke of Saxony. *Streifzüge durch die Kirchen*

- und Klöster Ägyptens*. Leipzig, 1913.
- . *Neue Streifzüge durch die Kirchen und Klöster Ägyptens*. Leipzig and Berlin, 1930.
 - Jomard, E. F. "Description de Syène." In *Description de l'Égypte*, Vol. 1, *Antiquités*, pp. 143ff. Paris 1809-1822.
 - Jullien, M. "Quelques anciens couvents de l'Égypte." *Missions catholiques* 35 (1903):188-90; 198-202; 212-14; 237-40; 250- 52; 257-58; 274-76; 283-84.
 - Maspero, G. "Premier rapport à l'Institut égyptien sur les fouilles exécutées en Égypte de 1881 à 1886." *Bulletin l'Institut d'Égypte* 6 (1886):3-91.
 - . *Ruines et paysages d'Égypte*. Paris, 1910.
 - Monneret de Villard, U. "Descrizione generale di San Simeone presso Aswan." *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 26 (1926):211-45.
 - . *Description générale du Monastère de St. Siméon à Aswan*. Milan, 1927.
 - . *Il monastero di San Simeone presso Aswan*, 2 vols. Milan, 1927.
 - Morgan, J. de, et al. [Catalogue](#) *des monuments et inscriptions de l'Égypte antique*, 3 vols. Vienna, 1895-1909.
 - Munier, H. "Les Stèles coptes du monastère de saint Siméon à Assouan." *Aegyptus* 11 (1930-1931):257-300 and 433-84.

RENÉ-GEORGES COQUIN

MAURICE MARTIN, S. J.

Architecture

Dayr Anba Hadra lies about 4,000 feet (1200 m) from the riverbank in the region of the former [hermitage](#) of Anba Hadra. A few rock caves, some of which contain wall paintings of the sixth or seventh century, can still be seen. These caves are, in fact, a string of rock tombs of the pharaonic period that were transformed into habitations. The high structures of

stone and brick masonry of the *dayr*, however, belong to a refoundation of the monastery in the early eleventh century.

In its present shape the *dayr* is spread out on two natural terraces. Enclosed by a comparatively thin wall with a walkway for the lookout on top and several lookout towers at the corners, these terraces are joined into a coherent rectangular complex. In addition, each terrace has a gate with a towerlike structure attached to the front on the side opposite the other. As regards the internal arrangement, the lower terrace holds the church with the baptistery and several quarters for pilgrims. On the upper terrace the large living quarters, designed to serve also as a keep, make up the dominant building. Besides the monks' cells (chambers with six or more berths), it contains the refectory and the kitchen facilities. The mill and bakery as well as several storerooms lie outside the keep. On the upper terrace there are also numerous workshops. Deserving special attention among these are a pottery kiln situated in the upper southwest corner and several extensive laundering establishments. The latter suggest the existence of a dyer's establishment, indicating that probably the monastery kept its own flocks of sheep. A well or a cistern enabling the inhabitants to resist an extended siege has so far not been located.

Having lost its former domes, the monastery church is preserved only as a ruin. It was built in the first half of the eleventh century. Architecturally it belongs to the three-naved type of the octagon- domed church found most frequently in middle Byzantine architecture on the Greek mainland. It differs from the pure octagon- domed type by the fact that the nave was furnished with two domed bays instead of one behind the other. Thus, the church at Dayr Anba Hadra is at the same time an example of the domed oblong church, which appears in Egypt from the Fatimid period onward.

The sanctuary in the [proper](#) meaning is only as broad as the domed area of the nave. The eastern niche (askinah) here has a rectangular shape; it joins the *khurus* (choir) to become the greater spatial form of a TRICONCH. On both sides the aisles continue along the sanctuary up to

the east wall of the church. Originally the entrances to the church were found here. As the sanctuary was enlarged, occasioning the addition of a further zone of rooms to the east, the aisles were provided with open porticoes on each side. In a third phase, however, this form of access was abandoned once more, and the entrances were blocked. In this way were obtained two additional rooms, which could be entered only from within. In the northern room of these, the baptistery was installed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Clarke, S. *Christian Antiquities in the [Nile](#) Valley*, pp. 95ff. Oxford, 1912.
- Clédat, J. "Les Inscriptions de Saint Siméon." *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 37 (1915):41ff.
- Grossmann, P. "Der christliche Baukunst in Ägypten." *Enchoria* 8 (1978):97ff, table 19a, pl. 191.
- . *Mittelalterliche Langhauskuppelkirchen und verwandte Typen in Oberägypten*. Gläckstadt, 1982.
- Monneret de Villard, U. *Description générale du monastère de S. Siméon à Aswan*. Milan, 1927.

PETER GROSSMANN

Art

The [decoration](#) is exclusively pictorial. It is concentrated in the north wing of the church and to some extent in the keep. In the eastern conch of the sanctuary, the church shows Christ in a mandorla. He is enthroned, holding on one knee with his left hand a codex spanned by a cross and giving a benediction with his right hand, which passes beyond the ring of the mandorla. Each of two richly dressed angels leans on the mandorla with his right hand. The one on the right holds in his left hand a globe. Behind him is a personage of the same stature with a square nimbus.

Below this fresco and separated from it by a decorative register, including an arcading between two pendentives, the decoration of which is destroyed, one can distinguish on the left the remains of a painting of small personages juxtaposed, each haloed and clothed in a white tunic.

In a niche on the west side, a fresco shows the Virgin standing full-face between two angels.

The grotto, which is situated at the western extremity of the north wing, has left some traces that are difficult to read. J. de Morgan (1894, p. 133) mentioned three walls occupied by a sequence of thirty-six figures in one register, which could be a part of the seventy-two disciples of Christ (Metzger, 1959, pp. 299-306). The ceiling is spanned by a series of meanders interrupted by large squares and octagons containing busts (de Bock, 1901, pl. 32.1).

In the castrum a painting, now destroyed, could still be seen at the time of de Morgan's investigation (1894, p. 134; de Bock, 1901, pl. 32.2). According to him, six personages stand out on the left against a red background, [preceded](#) by an archangel turned toward the enthroned Christ. The destruction of the continuation of the painting leads one to suppose a symmetrical group, which would complete the ensemble of the twelve apostles on either side of Christ.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bock, V. de. *Matériaux pour servir à l'archéologie de l'Égypte chrétienne*. St. Petersburg, 1901.
- Metzger, B. M. "Seventy or Seventy-two Disciples?" *New Testament Studies* 5 (1959):299-306.
- Morgan, J. de. "Service des antiquités de l'Égypte." [Catalogue des monuments et inscriptions](#), ser. 1, Vol. 1. Vienna, 1894-1909.
- Walters, C. C. *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt*, pp. 241, 311-13. Warminster, 1974.



PIERRE DU BOURGUET, S. J.

Tags: [Places](#)