

## **DAYR MAR BUQTUR (Qamulah)**

### **History**

This famous monastery is situated on the [left bank](#) of the Nile to the west of Qamulah. It is, without doubt, the one mentioned in the thirteenth-century Churches and Monasteries of Egypt.

It is known above all because of one of its monks, Athanasius, who became [bishop](#) of Qus in the fourteenth century. He was present at Dayr Mar Buqtur and signed the record of the proceedings as a witness at the enthronement of Timothy, bishop of Qasr Ibrim.

The monastery is named by the seventeenth-century Fathers Protais and François (see Sauneron, 1974, p. 93). J. Vansleb followed their text, being unable to pass beyond Jirja (1677, p. 411; English ed., 1678, p. 246). In 1718 C. Sicard visited it and wrote his account (1982, Vol. 2, p. 227).

It had only a single church, noted by S. Clarke (1912, pp. 123 -26). It escaped total destruction in 1917.

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## **Architecture**

Dayr Mar Buqtur is now an uninhabited monastic complex surrounded by a wall. Only the old church merits some attention. In this building several phases can be detected. The oldest building to be erected in this spot was a basilica built of mud bricks. Only the outer walls of its naos have been preserved, however. On the basis of the shape of the [niches](#) contained in these walls, the church may be dated to the eighth or ninth century. Toward the end of the twelfth century, the church was transformed into a domed oblong church, of which the naos was covered by two domes, with a larger dome above the anterior bay of the nave and a smaller dome over the rear.

To the east of the nave was a khurus (room between the naos and the sanctuary) subdivided by transverse arches into three bays of equal size, each covered by a sail vault. In the same way, the three rooms of the eastern sanctuary were originally of approximately the same size. The rooms found there today came into being in modern times, when the church was enlarged toward the north. North of the church is an external portico dating perhaps from the Mamluk period. The bays of this portico were covered originally with genuine pendentive [domes](#) that have all fallen down. Examples of this type of dome are rare in Egypt. At the southwest edge of the monastery are a couple of derelict mausoleums

from the Ottoman period.

Plans of the old church at Dayr Mar Buqtur showing successive stages of construction. (Courtesy of Peter Grossmann)

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