

DAYR MAR TUMAS

This Church of [Saint Thomas](#) lies at the edge of the desert cliffs about 8 miles (13 km) northeast of Akhmim. It is entered from a courtyard that contains no other buildings, and no trace of other monastery buildings survives. The church was built of baked brick in two building phases. The original structure is a centralized, domed building with three apses forming a triconch, a scheme typical for the medieval period from at least the eleventh century (see Grossmann, 1978, pp. 142-43). It is three units wide and three deep. At the east is an [apse](#) with three niches flanked by rectangular corner rooms. The southern room contains a grave attributed to Saint Thomas. In front of these corner rooms, apses with one niche each face north and south.

A central bay separates the apses, and there is a row of three bays along the west. The units are divided by arches running from piers to [pilasters](#) on the west wall and on the eastern spur walls. A [mud](#)-brick screen (between the piers) and narrow doorways (between piers and walls) divide this choir bay and apses from the western bays. The two central bays are covered by [domes](#) on squinches, the south and northwest bays by barrel vaults, the apses by semidomes, and the south and northeast rooms by domes on pendentives.

The two central [domes](#) are pierced by circular tubes that allow light into the interior. The bricks are painted red and black, as in many churches of the area (see DAYR AL-'ADHRA' near Akhmim), but the brickwork itself appears earlier than in the similarly painted ones. Four rooms have been added to the west, connected with the original church only by two small doors and a window. Their roofs are also pierced by circular tubes admitting light. Concerning the date of the church, it might belong, as similar structures do, to the sixteenth century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [SHELA MCNALLY](#)
- Grossmann, P. "Der christlicher Baukunst in Ägypten." *Enchoria* 8 (1978):142-43.

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