

## **DAYR MATRA**

When the patriarch [BENJAMIN I](#) returned to Alexandria in 644 from his exile in Upper Egypt, he chose as the [episcopal](#) residence the monastery of Matra, because it was the only one in the region of Alexandria whose monks had resisted the [pressure](#) of the emperor Heraclius to accept the dogma of CHALCEDON (451). ABU AL-MAKARIM, who gives the same information (1984, p. 158) but writes Batra instead of Matra, adds that the patriarch ISAAC (689-692 A.D.) [renewed](#) its building.

Unfortunately, neither of these two witnesses gives us an indication of the geographical situation of the monastery. However, there still exists a place called al-Matras near Wardiyan on the shores of [Lake Maryut](#) to the west of Alexandria, in which the name of this monastery is [perhaps](#) perpetuated (Breccia, 1919, pp. 180-81).

The question is whether this monastery was connected with Saint Metras, a martyr at Alexandria under Decius (8 Babah and 10 Misra). Several texts mention his martyrdom on the outskirts, to the east of the town, near the so-called Sun Gate (Calderini, 1935, Vol. 1, p. 175; "Life of John the Almoner," PG 93, col. 1647; "Nicephorus Callistus," *Historia ecclesiastica* 5, 30, PG 145, col. 1124; "Miracles of Saints John and Cyrus," PG 87, col. 3464). It will be noted that in the SYNAXARION, the saint's name is written in the same way as in the *History of the Patriarchs* and in Abu al-Makarim. The latter seems to indicate in his book that after the burning down of his church, the saint's head was left there, which may mean that the monastery did indeed bear this martyr's name and that it was distinct from the martyrdom.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- Abu al-Makarim. *Tarikh al-Kana'is wa-al-Adyirah*, ed. Samuil al-Suryani. Cairo, 1984.
- Breccia, E. "Ancora un epitaffio di monaco alessandrino." *Bulletin de*

*la Société royale d'archéologie d'Alexandrie* 17 (1919):179-81.

- Calderini, A. *Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell'Egitto greco e romano*. Cairo, 1935.

**RENÉ-GEORGES COQUIN**

**MAURICE MARTIN, S. J.**

Tags: [Places](#)