

DAYR YUHANNIS KAMA

Amid a vast field of ruins southeast of DAYR AL-SURYAN and DAYR ANBA BISHOI stand the remains of Dayr Yuhannis Kama in Wadi al-Natrun (SCETIS) in the western desert of Egypt. This monastery was built in the ninth century (c. A.D. 840). Tradition has it that the founder himself, Abba Yuhannis, built the commanding towers and the strongly fortified walls in addition to the church that was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Actually this church was called after the Holy THEOTOKOS as she appeared to Abba Yuhannis in a glorious vision. She then expressed her desire to have a holy community and a convent built on the site.

In the last decades of the tenth century, the monastery was pillaged. The remains of the interior buildings, however, suggest that they were quadrilaterally structured, leaving the center open for plants.

Most prominent among these buildings was the *qasr*, an isolated triple-storied tower adjacent to the principal church reached from the first-floor level by a drawbridge. Its major function was to serve as a fortress enabling the monks to withstand prolonged sieges. For this reason, it contained a corn mill, a well, a few cells, and a chapel on the top floor. Monastic possessions and rare manuscripts were kept there also.

It is believed that this monastery survived until about the second decade of the fifteenth century after which it was totally abandoned. It was still flourishing when Patriarch BENJAMIN II visited it in 1330. The fourteenth-century traveler Ludolf von Suchem visited it before the turn of the century. In 1430 its monks migrated to Dayr al-Suryan, transferring with them the relics of their patron saint.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Burkitt, F. C. "The Monasteries of the Wadi'n-Natroun." *Journal of Theological Studies* 28 (1927):320-25; 34 (1933):188-92; 36

(1935):105-107.

- Davis, M. H. "The Life of Abba [John](#) Khamé." Coptic text ed. and trans. from the Codex Vaticanus 60. [PO](#) 14, pp. 313-72. Paris, 1920.
- Evelyn-White, H. G. *The Monasteries of the Wadi'n Natrun*, Pt. 1, *New Coptic Texts from the Monastery of St. [Macarius](#)*. New York, 1926; Pt. 2, *The History of the [Monasteries of Nitria](#) and Scetis*. New York, 1932; Pt. 3, *The [Architecture](#) and Archeology*. New York, 1933.
- Martin, C., "Les Monastères du Wadi Natroun." *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 62 (1935):113-34, 238-52.

FAYEK MAHER ISHAQ

Tags: [Places](#)