

MONASTERY OF ST. JEREMIAH

It is situated at Saqqara, the necropolis of ancient Memphis. It was founded probably in the early sixth century, flourished in the seventh and eighth centuries, and was abandoned around the middle of the ninth century. Excavated in 1906, 1910, and the 1970s, it represents one of the few communal [monasteries](#) that has been [archaeologically](#) investigated.

The monastery included churches, one or more refectories, facilities for baking bread, a kitchen, workshops, a wine press, storerooms, and other buildings, the functions of which remains obscure. The main church was built in the second half of the seventh century.

The monks lived in cells with oratories that feature [niches](#) in their eastern walls. Some of the [niches](#) were decorated with paintings of [Christ](#) enthroned and [the Virgin Mary](#) with the [Christ](#) Child on her lap, flanked by archangels or holy men. A few [biblical](#) themes such as the sacrifice of Abraham have been preserved on the north wall of the refectory. The sixth- or seventh-century pulpit that was discovered in the monastery is the only freestanding example in stone to have survived virtually intact.

The excavations also yielded many fascinating architectural sculptures, such as lintels, friezes, niches, and column capitals, of which a considerable number had been taken from late Roman sepulchral buildings. The majority of the sculptures and paintings that have been preserved are exhibited in the **Coptic Museum**. *See also* MONASTICISM, EGYPTIAN.

GAWDAT GABRA

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