

TAQIY AL-DIN AL-MAQRIZI, (A.D. 1364-1442)

Arab historian and topographer. Al-Maqrizi composed two major works, a monumental topographical study, *al-Mawa'iz wa-al I'tibar fi Dhikr [al-Khitat](#) wa-al-Athar* (4 vols.), and a universal history, *Kitab al-Suluk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Muluk* (4 vols.).

Though at first concentrating his literary activity on local history and topography, he later extended his labors to include social history and such specific subjects as weights and measures. In the field of general history, however, he was led to deal with countries neighboring Egypt such as Nubia, the Sudan, and Abyssinia. In particular, he became involved in Coptic history, where he produced what is probably the only detailed study on the subject by a Muslim writer.

This work proved to be a major accomplishment and an original document of the highest importance in medieval Coptic annals. It was also incorporated within his wider *Khitat* under the title *Akhbar Qibt Misr* (news of the Copts of Egypt), which attracted Western scholarship and was published and translated into some European [languages](#) by eminent scholars. In Latin, it first appeared under the title *Makrizii Historia Coptorum . . .*, edited by H. J. Wetzer (1828).

It was edited by the well-known [German](#) Orientalist F. [Wüstenfeld](#) under the title *Geschichte der Copten* (Göttingen, 1845). An English translation was produced by S. C. Malan, entitled *A Short History of the Copts and their Church* (London, 1873).

Maqrizi begins his work with two short introductions on the prehistory of the Copts as well as their mythology before they were converted to Christianity. The rest of the book, comprising historic materials concerning the Copts, is divided into a number of sections, each treating a phase of Coptic history. The first section offers details of the Christianization of the Copts. Here he includes the age of persecutions,

the conversion of Constantine, and the establishment of Christianity as the state religion, in addition to the early story of the [Coptic patriarchs](#) to the end of Byzantine rule.

The following section deals with the [ARAB CONQUEST OF EGYPT](#) and the age of Islamic rule in Egypt. The patriarchs of the Copts, including the Melchite patriarchs, are enumerated with interesting episodes of the reign of each of them. A special chapter is devoted to explanatory notices on the [Christian](#) sects including the Melchites, the Nestorians, the Jacobites, and “the Barda’aniyyah and the Marquliyyah,” otherwise those of the district of al-Ruha, thus meaning the Antiochene church. Another brief chapter deals with baptism and the organization of the Coptic church.

The next section enumerates the monasteries, with short notices on each. This is a very interesting section, since it includes the fifteenth-century houses, some of which have disappeared.

The final section is equally interesting as it is devoted to the enumeration of churches throughout Lower and Upper Egypt, including Cairo and Alexandria.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [Encyclopedia of Islam](#), Vol. 5, pp. 175-76. Leiden, 1987. Wüstenfeld, F. *Geschichte der Copten*. Göttingen, 1845.

[AZIZ S. ATIYA](#)

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