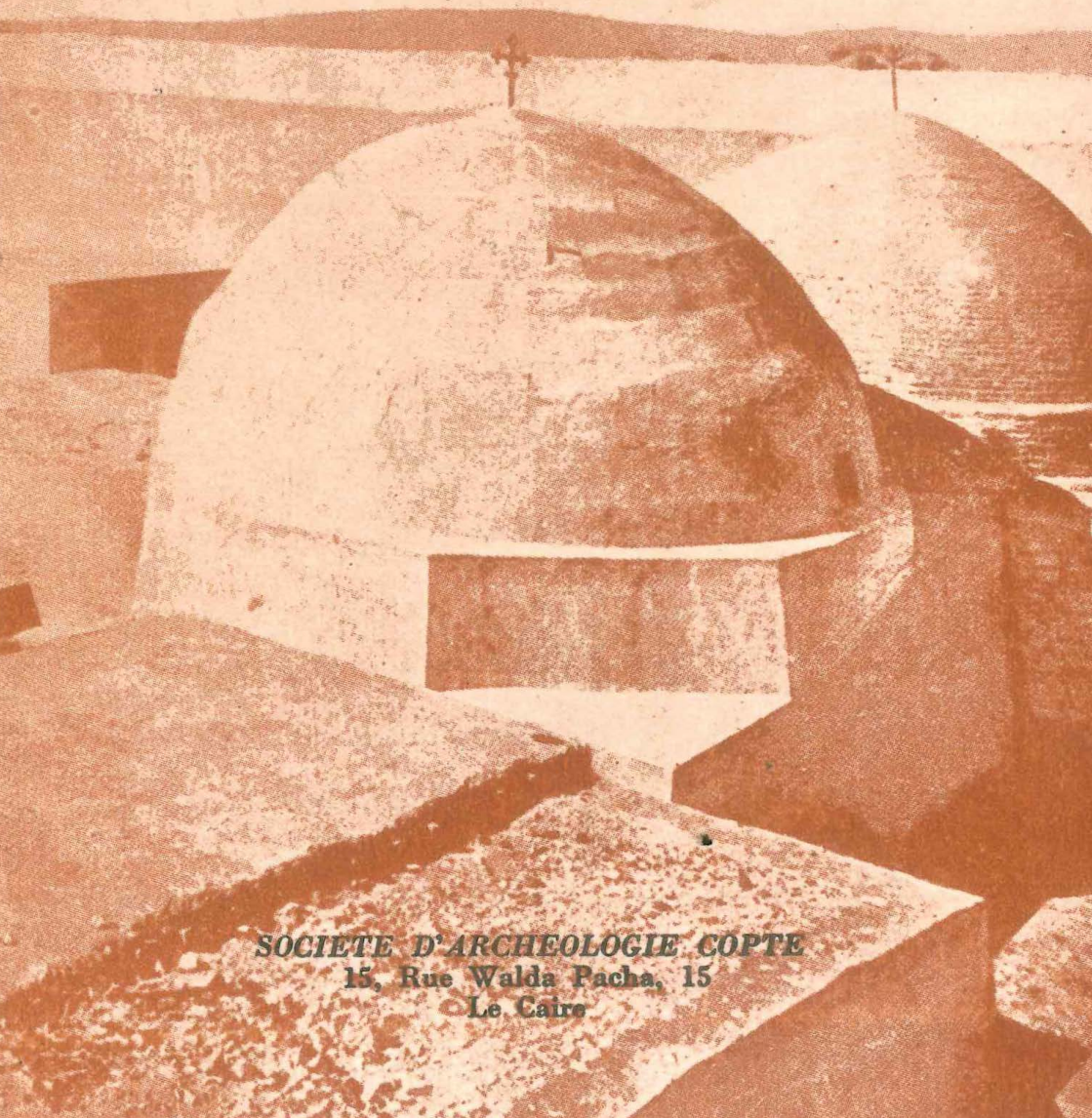


A GUIDE TO THE MONASTERIES OF THE WADI 'N-NATRUN

By
O.H.E. KHS- BURMESTER



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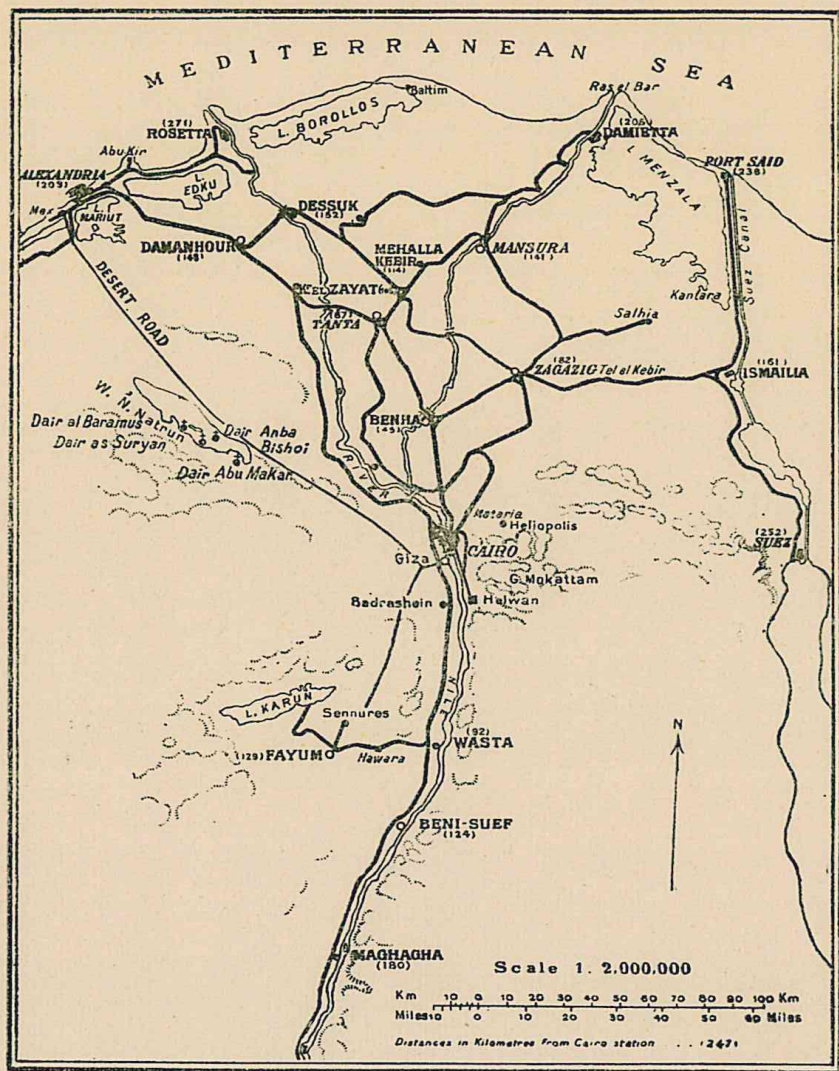
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Map of the Wādi 'n-Natrūn

FOREWORD

To Egypt the Christian Church is heavily indebted for the creation of an institution which from its very beginning profoundly influenced her organization and philosophy, and indeed continues to do so even to the present day, for it was in the Nile Valley that monastic life was first established. Indeed, within a few years of the foundation of monasticism, Egypt became justly famed throughout the Ancient World for the number of her monasteries and the saintly lives of her hermits and monks.

Though St. Paul the Theban who died about 341 A.D. must, strictly speaking, be considered the first Christian hermit, St. Antony who was his junior by some twenty years, was the real originator of monastic life.

It must not be thought that in fleeing from the world and taking up their abode in caves in the desert, the hermits did this out of any disgust of the world or through any cowardly fear of facing the temptations of the Devil in the world itself, but they did so rather with the idea of carrying warfare against the Evil One into his own country, for then, just as to-day, in popular thought, the desert was the home of demons and evil spirits, 'afârit, as the fellah would call them.

Indeed, we have only to read the biographies of the Egyptian hermits and monks to realize that their entire life was one continual strife against the

powers of darkness that inhabited the wastes of the desert.

St. Antony took up his abode in the Eastern Desert which borders the Red Sea, in 285 A.D., at the age of thirty-five years, and very soon there gathered around his retreat other men who were desirous of imitating his manner of life, but it was only after twenty years that St. Antony consented to abandon his seclusion and to become a father and guide to his followers, and thus it was that the monastic system came into being.

The spread of monasticism was amazingly rapid, and within a few years of its inception, monasteries began to spring up throughout the length and breadth of Egypt.

There were, however, certain great centres of monasticism, for example, in the north, that in the region of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, at Nitria and Scete, where monasteries were founded by such famous monks as Amoun, Macarius, Pshoi and John the Short, to name but a few. In the east of Egypt there were two famous monasteries, the one founded by St. Paul the Theban and the other by St. Antony, both of which are still in existence. In the south, in the region of Denderah, at Tabennesis (the palm groves of Isis) St. Pachomius, or Pachôm, to give him his Egyptian name, founded the first cœnobitic monastery, that is to say a monastery in which the monks lived together in community and followed a rule which he established for them.

St. Pachomius died in 348 A.D., and the 600th centenary of this illustrious son of the Nile Valley was celebrated with great solemnity by the Churches of every denomination in Egypt in 1948. It was

this rule of cœnobitic or community life for monks which was adopted by St. Basil and later by St. Benedict for their monastic institutions, and through them that monasticism spread throughout the Near East and Europe where monasteries became the great centres of learning and civilization in the Dark Ages which followed the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West.

The Coptic ⁽¹⁾ monasteries preserve, in general, the features of original monasticism ; that is to say, it is the duty of the monks to perform daily the Divine Office, to fast, to practise chastity and penance, and to worship God, and, in a word, to live as much as possible like angels, and, in fact, they call their life the "angelic life". It follows, therefore, that they do not engage in any teaching or learned studies or in parochial work, or, indeed, in any of those activities which are generally associated with western monasticism. In Europe, the nearest comparison to Coptic monasticism is the monastic life observed by the Carthusian monks ⁽²⁾.

Of the four great monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, namely, al-Baramûs, John the Short, Anbâ ⁽³⁾ Bishoi and Abû Makâr, which trace their origin to the 4th century, that of John the Short no longer

1) The term Copt is nothing else than a corruption of the word "Egyptian". In Greek this is ΑΙΓΥΠΤΙΟΣ (Aigyptios) from which the initial diphthong "Ai" and the ending "ios" have dropped off, leaving the word ΓΥΠΤ "Gypt" which has become in European languages "Copt".

2) For the Rite of Initiation into Monasticism, cf. O.H.E. KHS-Burmester, 'Rites and Ceremonies of the Coptic Church', Part VIII, in *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, vol. XI 1954, pp. 217-229.

3) A title prefixed to the names of Saints and patriarchs, meaning "Father".

exists, having fallen into ruin. It appears to have been abandoned somewhere in the 15th century. On the other hand, between the end of the 6th and the middle of the 9th centuries three new monasteries made their appearance in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, namely, As-Suryân, John Kamé and Abba Moses. Of these only that of As-Suryân has survived till the present day.

The aim of the present work is to give a short historical and architectural description of these four surviving monasteries, three of which, though often rebuilt and restored following raids and pillages by the Western Berbers, date from the 4th century. They are : Al-Baramûs, Anbâ Bishoi and Abû Makâr. The monastery As-Suryân dates from the beginning of the 8th century.

If a visit is to be paid to all these four monasteries in a single day, an early start should be made from either Alexandria or Cairo. To reach these monasteries, the visitor should proceed, either by private car or by one of the omnibuses of the Desert Route Service, from either Alexandria or Cairo, to the Rest House on the Desert Route which runs between Alexandria and Cairo. Here, a jeep may be engaged for a visit to one or all of the monasteries. If the whole day is to be spent in visiting the monasteries, the visitor is advised to take with him a basket with provisions. If the visitor prefers, he may spend the night at the Rest House, where excellent meals and accommodation can be obtained, and then make an early start with the jeep in the morning. It is not advisable to attempt to visit the monasteries in a private car, unless it has been fitted with balloon tyres, and the services secured

of a competent driver who knows well the tracks leading to the monasteries. On leaving the monasteries, the visitor, may if he wish, leave a small donation for their upkeep.

O.H.E. KHS- BURMESTER

GENERAL REMARKS ON THE MONASTERIES

There are four monasteries in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, namely, Al-Baramûs, *i.e.* 'of the Romans', As-Suryân, *i.e.* 'of the Syrians', Anbâ Bishoi, in Coptic Pshoi, Abû Makâr, *i.e.* the famous St. Macarius who is honoured among the founders of monasticism, in both the East and the West.

In their actual fortified state, all these monasteries date from about the middle of the 9th century, at which time they were enclosed by high walls to protect their inmates against raids by the desert Arabs. Earlier, each monastery was provided with a keep or 'tower of refuge' in which the monks might find temporarily safety from a sudden attack by marauders. Experience, however, soon proved that such keeps were of no use if a blockade was established by the attackers, since the water supply of the monks would soon fail.

Almost from the time when hermits began to inhabit cells and caves in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, they were exposed to attacks from desert tribes known as the Western Berbers, and as they possessed no means of defence, they were completely at the mercy of their assailants.

In all, these monasteries suffered five sacks. The first occurred in 407 A.D., the second, a few years later, in 410 A.D., the third, in 444 A.D., the fourth, in 507 A.D., and the fifth and last, in 817 A.D. In all these sacks monastic buildings were

wrecked, churches plundered and the monks either slain or carried off as captives. In addition to all this, there were a further two raids on the monasteries, one in 866 A.D. and the other in 1069 A.D. which, if not so disastrous as the former sacks, nevertheless did considerable damage to the monasteries.

After every sack or raid, those of the monks who managed to escape with their lives, courageously returned as soon as conditions permitted, to their ruined habitations, and set about rebuilding the monastic buildings ; and thus it was that monastic life was never entirely extinguished in the Wâdi 'n-Natrûn. However, of the seven important monasteries which existed here at one time, only four have survived the vicissitudes of time and destruction wrought by the hand of man.

I. DAIR AL-BARAMUS (1)

Historical Notice

The Arabic name 'Baramûs' is a transliteration of the Coptic 'Pa-Romeos' which means 'of the Romans'. The origin of this title is to be traced most probably to the famous Roman monk Arsenius who came to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn in 394 A.D., and took up his abode there and embraced the monastic life. This Arsenius had been tutor to Arcadius and Honorius, the sons of the Roman Emperor Theodosius, who on the death of their father, became Emperors of the Eastern and Western Empires respectively.

There is, however, a traditional account of the origin of this title which derives it from Maximus and Domitius, the sons of the Roman Emperor Valentinian I (died 379 A.D.), who retired to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, where they became monks. If this tradition be correct, then Maximus and Domitius must have been natural sons of the Emperor Valentinian I, because he did not have any legitimate offspring.

As regards the date of the origin of this monastery, there are good grounds for believing that this was the first monastic community in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, that is to say the original settlement established by St. Macarius before 340 A.D. Naturally, at that time, it was merely a group of cells.

1) The Arabic word "Dair" means "Monastery".

It seems that the story of the Roman princes Maximus and Domitius arose out of a confusion with the story of the 'Little Strangers'. These 'Little Strangers' were two unnamed youths who came from abroad to the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, and were received and honoured by St. Macarius. In due course, they became monks in his community, and after their death, a church was erected over their tomb to which St. Macarius gave the name of the 'Cell of the Romans'.

This monastery together with the three others already mentioned, was sacked by the Berbers in 407 A.D., and the monks slain or dispersed. Arsenius, however, escaped, and was living again in the restored cells, when the second sack occurred in 410 A.D. This time he also escaped and went to live in a cell at Troe, the modern Tura, which is to the south of Old Cairo. Here, in later times, a monastery was built over his tomb. The ruins of this monastery were discovered and identified some twelve years ago ⁽¹⁾.

The subsequent history of this monastery is that of the other three monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn — it suffered sacks and raids, was restored again and again, and finally in the 9th century was protected by a fortified wall.

Architectural Notice

The plaster-covered wall which encloses this monastery is 10 metres to 11 metres in height, and 2 metres in thickness, and except for its western side which is of indefinite date, probably dates from

1) Cf. *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte*, t. VI (1940), p. 222 and Plate III.

the last decade of the 9th century. A parapet shoulder high, together with a parapet walk completes the ramparts (Plate I).

Within the gate there is a lofty vaulted passage way, 6. 5 metres long which may once have been closed at its inner end by a second gate (Plate II). Above this passage is the gatehouse which is common to all the four monasteries. Steps lead up to an oblong barrel-vaulted chamber from which a door opens onto the roof of the passage. The plan of this gatehouse is identical with that at the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoi.

As regards the area enclosed by the walls it may be divided roughly into three parts. *Southern Area.* The southern part of this area is without interest, and contains only some modern buildings, but the western part represents most probably the ancient nucleus of the monastery, containing as it does the principal church with its dependent chapels, the refectory, ancient kitchen and cells. The church is dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary (Plate III) and contains the usual three haikals or sanctuaries. The nave is divided by a wooden screen dating from the last century (Plate IV). The aisles are barrel-vaulted and are divided from the nave by arcades having piers of solid masonry. The vault of the nave is of brickwork with windows pierced in its lower part on either side to admit light. At the west end there is the usual tank let into the floor, which was used for the rite of the blessing of the water on the Feast of the Epiphany ⁽¹⁾. Nowadays, a port-

1) For the Service of the Blessing of the Water on the Feast of the Epiphany, cf. O.H.E. KHS-Burmester, 'Rites and Ceremonies of the Coptic Church', Part VI, in *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, vol. IX, 1952, pp. 306-310.

able basin is used in all Coptic churches for this ceremony. At the west end of the south aisle there is an interesting Corinthian style capital with acanthus leaves cut from limestone (Plate V). In this part of the church there are preserved two objects of interest, a) a bell of European origin with the name of the Four Evangelists inscribed upon it. It was probably brought to the monastery from Alexandria during a time of persecution. b) a disused lamp holder which formerly hung in the sanctuary. It consists of three circular bronze disks held in position by vertical rods. These disks are pierced with holes into which tubular glass lamps were fitted. The choir is reached through a wide and lofty archway, once furnished with wooden doors which are now replaced by a screen of plain vertical bars. Against the north wall of the choir there stands a feretory which contains the bodies of the Roman youths Maximus and Domitius *alias* the 'Little Strangers' and the body of Anbâ Mûsa. This feretory is adorned with a painting of the royal youths (Plate VI). The numerous eicons hanging in the choir are, however, not older than the last century. The entrance to the central haikal or sanctuary is provided with wooden doors which have panels carved in the early Fatimide manner (Plate VII). The central sanctuary is square, whereas, the lateral sanctuaries are oblong. The altar of the central sanctuary is of somewhat unusual form, being supported on small open arches at the sides and the back. As the church contains elements of widely different periods, we cannot assign to it any one date. For example, the two piers at the west ends, off the south aisles are not later than the 9th century and probably earlier.

The nave, choir and aisles belong probably to the 11th century, and there is later work which can be assigned to the 13th century. The sanctuaries belong probably to the Fatimide period (972-1171 A.D.). The now disused chapel of St. Theodore is built against the north-west wall of the principal church. In 1911 its altar was removed, and the chapel was used as a store for salt. Its date may be 14th century. A second Chapel, that of St. George, is entered from the west end of the north-west of the principal church. Its date may be 12th or 13th century. As at the Monastery of Anbâ Bishoi, there is also a baptistery which adjoins the north-west corner of the principal church. It is quadrilateral in plan, and the roof is barrel-vaulted. It now serves as a store-room for mats and baskets. The Refectory which is parallel to the axis of the principal church is a rectangular hall, divided by transverse arches into three domed bays. Light is admitted through circular openings in the crowns of the domes. A table of plastered masonry runs from one end of the hall to the other, with a bench along its south side. At the western end there is a stone lectern 1.42 metres in height. The date of this Refectory appears to be 9th century. The ancient kitchen which is no longer in use is a quadrilateral building. In the centre there is an oblong pier from which spring four arches. The two recesses formed by the projection of the eastern walls were probably small fireplaces. *Northern Area.* In this area is the keep or 'tower of refuge' (Plate III). It contains a ground-floor and a first and second floor. It is entered at the first floor by a drawbridge. The ground-floor is oblong in plan and is divided into two parts by a corridor. It contains nothing of

interest. The first floor is similarly divided by a corridor. On the second floor there is a church dedicated to St. Michael. The haikal or sanctuary is covered with a dome on sleeper timbers, and has a panelled screen. The body of the church is divided by a wooden screen into nave and choir. As the 'light-shaft' of this keep gives but very little light to the ground floor, it seems that the use of this shaft was not for the purpose of admitting light, but that ladders were placed in it, as a means to ascend to the first and second floors. This keep may possibly date back as early as the 7th century. *North-Eastern Area.* In the centre of this area there is a garden plot, the modern church of St. John the Baptist, a water-wheel enclosure, and the modern guest house. The south sanctuary of the church is fitted up as a library for the books and manuscripts of the monastery. On the east and north sides of this area there are ranges of cells which back onto the enclosure walls. They are of the two-chambered type and are barrel-vaulted.

II. DAIR AS-SURYAN

Historical Notice

The name 'As-Suryân' means 'of the Syrians', and this monastery belonged at one time to the Syrians. This monastery was in the beginning a Coptic foundation, but was purchased, about the commencement of the 8th century, by merchants of Tekrit (Mesopotamia) who had a colony in Egypt, for the use of monks of their nation. Originally, this monastery was one of a class of monasteries known as

'Theotokos' or 'Mother of God' monasteries. To each of the four great monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn such a monastery was appended. The origin of these 'duplicate' monasteries goes back to the beginning of the 6th century, to the time of the Gaianite heresy. As the Gaianites professed that the Incarnation was merely apparent but not real, they thereby made the Virgin's title of Theotokos meaningless, and the Orthodox monks separated from these heretics and established new monasteries which they dedicated to the Mother of God (Theotokos). When, however, this heresy passed away, these 'duplicate' monasteries had no longer their *raison d'être*. In the case of the 'duplicate' monastery of the monastery of Anbâ Bishoi, it was sold to the Syrians, as has already been said. This monastery which was sacked together with the other monasteries in 817 A.D. was rebuilt and restored by the Syrians. It soon became a prosperous monastic institution which possessed a most important collection of Syriac books. In the middle of the 14th century it suffered a most serious set back, for at this time the Black Death swept over Egypt and took a terrible toll of the monks in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. Indeed, a note in a manuscript from this monastery states that in the year 1413 A.D. a visitor to this monastery found in it but a single monk. However, eventually it recovered and received aid from the Patriarch of Antioch in the last quarter of the 15th century. Another note in a manuscript from this monastery states that in 1516 A.D. there were forty-three monks in the monastery, of whom eighteen were Syrian and twenty-five Egyptian. From this time onwards the Egyptian element was

predominant, and in spite of proof of sale by the Syrian monks, the monastery eventually passed completely into the hands of the Egyptians. In 1634 A.D. the last known addition to the collection of Syriac books was made, and two years later, an Egyptian abbot was appointed by the Coptic Patriarchal Synod, and it seems almost certain that in the 18th century the Syrian control of the monastery had ended. When Elias Assemani, himself a Syrian, visited the monastery at the beginning of the 18th century, and acquired the famous collection of Syriac manuscripts now preserved in the Vatican Library, he does not mention any Syrian monk there at all. It is from this monastery that the important collection of Syriac manuscripts now in the British Museum came.

Architectural Notice

The monastery is a rough quadrilateral construction enclosed by walls varying in height from 11.45 metres to 9.55 metres, which were built probably towards the end of the 9th century (Plate VIII). Unlike the other monasteries, it is long and narrow, the proportion of its length to its breadth being roughly as that of the length of a ship to its beam. The interior area may be divided roughly into an eastern and western part. *Western Part.* The keep stands to the west of the entrance gate (Plate IX). It was erected before or not much later than 850 A.D., and before the enclosure walls were constructed. It comprises a basement and three floors which are reached by a stairway. In a ruined chamber on the first floor

the square wall niches should be noticed, as they probably served as shelves for books, and indicate that this room was the original library of the monastery. A corridor runs through the entire length of the second floor which has four barrel-vaulted chambers on one side of it and two on the other. On the third floor is the church of St. Michael (Plate IX). The body of this church which is barrel-vaulted, is divided into nave and choir by a skeleton screen of wooden bars. The dome of the sanctuary is built of burnt brick, carried on squinches which are filled in with stalactite work, enriched with pendants, and having windows pierced in the surface. The ornament and dome may date as early as the end of the 15th century. The sanctuary screen is modern. The principal church of the monastery is situated to the north-west of the keep. It is dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary, and around it there is an irregular group of buildings (Plate X). The church itself is almost an exact rectangle. The north porch dates from about the end of the 10th century. Its interior is square in shape and it has a pointed dome. The doorway retains its ancient doors which are worthy of notice, since they are the only carefully made outer doors remaining in any of the monasteries. The nave of the church has lateral aisles, and a masonry barrier 1.25 metres in height cuts off from the nave a space in which there is the usual basin let into the floor, the use of which has already been explained (Plate XI). In the western semidome there is a remarkable painting of the Ascension of Christ, the type of which is Syrian in origin. This painting is to be assigned probably to the first third of the 10th century. At the western end of the south aisle there is a passage

which leads to a chamber known as the Cell of Anbâ Bishoi. In it at the east end, is an altar, and at its western end there is a recess with elbow rests. Though the actual structure is not earlier than the 9th century, the very abnormal position of this chamber supports the tradition that this is the spot where God appeared to Anbâ Bishoi. The magnificent doors of the choir should be noticed. A Syriac inscription mentions that they were erected in A.D. 926. The panels are in ebony richly inlaid with ivory. The uppermost panels have figures and represent, reading from left to right, St. Peter, the Holy Virgin Mary, Christ and St. Mark. The semidomes of the choir have a remarkable series of paintings depicting incidents in the life of the Holy Virgin Mary. In the southern semidome we have the scene of the Annunciation. The Virgin is seated, and clad in a blue-green robe over which falls a dark red mantle. The Archangel Gabriel is a winged figure clad in a yellowish robe over which there is a dark red mantle. In the arched doorway of the Virgin's house there is inscribed in Greek : "Hail, thou who art full of grace! The Lord is with thee !" (Plate XII). In the same semidome there is a representation of the Nativity. The stars in the blue sky indicate that it is night, and the herald angels appear over the top of the rocky hill in which is the Cave of the Nativity. Above the mouth of the cave there is inscribed in Syriac the message : "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, goodwill among men" The Virgin is half sitting and half reclining on a mat, and behind her, slightly to her left is a stone manger in which lies Christ wrapped in swaddling clothes. St. Joseph, a white-haired figure is seated outside the cave. From the lower right hand corner

the Wise Men approach. They are represented as kings and each wears a crown. The first carries a purse of gold, the second, a casket of incense, the third, a cup of myrrh. In the left hand corner are the shepherds (Plate XII). In the northern semidome we have a representation of the Falling-Asleep of the Holy Virgin. The Virgin lies on a draped couch and over her bends St. Peter. St. John bends over the Virgin's feet, and on either side are grouped five Apostles. Behind the couch Christ stands attended by two angels. He is clad in a blue tunic over which falls a dark red outer robe. In His hands He bears the soul of the Holy Virgin swathed in white ⁽¹⁾. These paintings are early 10th century. On the west wall there is a tablet which should be noticed (Plate XIII). It is the sepulchral inscription, written in Coptic, of St. John Kamé which was probably brought to this monastery at the same time as the Saint's body, that is to say, when the monastery of St. John Kamé fell into ruin. The three haikals or sanctuaries are interesting, in that they are a practically intact specimen of 9th century sanctuaries. Two steps lead up from the choir to the sanctuary doors which, according to an inscription, were set up at the beginning of the 10th century. The uppermost row of panels have figures which represent, reading from left to right, St. Dioscorus, St. Mark, the Holy Virgin Mary, Christ and St. Ignatius (Plate XIV). Within the sanctuary, a third step leads up to the altar which should be particularly noticed. It has a slab of black marble or some other black stone, whereas, the altar slabs of the other monasteries are of white

1) The Coptic version of the Falling-Asleep of the Virgin and her Assumption can be read in Forbes Robinson's *Coptic Apocryphal Gospels*, Cambridge, 1896.

marble. It is of the same date as the sanctuary doors which according to the inscription in Syriac were erected in 914 A.D. The altar canopy is dated 1830 A.D., but certainly replaces an earlier canopy. The windows (unfortunately, whitewashed over), their tracery, and the stucco frieze and panels of the north and south walls are particularly interesting, as they are examples of early 10th century work. To this same period belong the tribune or synthronus behind the altar and the windows of the east wall richly decorated with moulded and carved stucco. On the north side of this church is the Chapel of the Forty-Nine Martyrs. These were monks who refused to seek refuge when the monastery was sacked for the third time by the Berbers, and obtained the crown of martyrdom. This chapel dates from the same period as the sanctuary of the church. In the Refectory, a table of masonry 80 cm. in height runs from end to end of the hall with a bench of masonry on either side, 40 cm. in height (Plate XV). The east end is almost a square, and is roofed over with a single large dome. Near the centre of the east wall there is a stone lectern.

Central Area. This is occupied by a garden and the modern guest house. *Eastern Part.* In this area there are three churches, a modern building, a garden and the cells of the monks. The largest church is that of the Holy Virgin Mary known as As-Sitt Miryam, i.e. the Lady Mary, to distinguish it from the other church also dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary. Between the porch of this church and the southern sanctuary is the Tree of St. Ephraem which is protected by walls. It is a fine tamarind of which the girth at the foot of the trunk is 2.57 metres (Plate XVI). This tree, according to tradition, is the staff of St. Ephraem who,

when he visited Anbâ Bishoi, left it outside his cell, and on emerging, found that it had taken root and had put forth leaves. Three steps lead down from the exterior ground level to the porch of the church which in its general plan dates from the 9th century. A further three steps lead from the porch down into the nave, the western end of which has the usual basin let into the floor. The choir is separated from the nave by a solid wall of masonry which is pierced by a large central archway and two small lateral archways. The doors date from the 14th or 15th century (Plate XVII). On the north side of the doorway of the central sanctuary there is a relatively modern feretory in which the relics of St. John Kamé are placed, when this church is used for services. The sanctuary screen is of dark wood inlaid with ivory, possibly of the 15th century. The canopy over the altar does not seem to be earlier than the 19th century, but certainly replaces an earlier one. In the southern sanctuary there is a very interesting marble tray with an inscription in Greek and Nubian which contains a prayer for the soul of George, king of Nubia who died, according to the inscription, in 1158 A.D. It was probably brought hither either from the formerly existing monastery of St. Elias for Abyssinian monks or from an unrecorded cell of Nubian monks. Against the west side of this church there is built the Church of SS. Honnos and Marutha which, however, is no longer used for services. Its date seems to be about the first quarter of the 15th century, when Coptic monks came to this monastery from the ruined monastery of St. John Kamé. In the north-east corner of this area is a ruined church which was dedicated to St. John

the Short. When this monastery was visited in 1837 by Robert Curzon this church was used by the Abyssinian monks who had a community in the monastery.

III. DAIR ANBA BISHOI

Historical Notice

Anbâ Bishoi, in Coptic Pshoi, retired as a young man to the desert and took up his residence in a cave there. Soon there gathered round him others who were desirous of following the monastic life under his guidance, and at the time when St. Macarius the Great was an old man, Anbâ Bishoi founded his community. On the first sack of the monastery both St. John the Short and Anbâ Bishoi made their escape, the former going to the monastery of St. Antony in the Eastern Desert, whilst the latter settled in the vicinity of Antinoe, the modern Ansina, in Upper Egypt. Here Anbâ Bishoi died and his body was translated to the city of Antinoe, where it rested until it was again translated to the monastery which he had founded in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn. This second translation of the relics of Anbâ Bishoi took place under the Patriarch Joseph (831-849). The same fate befell the monastery of Anbâ Bishoi as that of the other monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, in the various sacks by the Berbers, and it was here, so tradition relates, that the barbarians halted and washed their blood-stained swords in a spring of water, on their way back from the slaughter of the forty-nine monks who have been previously mentioned. In the time of the patriarch Benjamin I (623-662 A.D.) this monastery was restored, only to be ruined again in the fifth sack of the

monasteries. Restored once again, it suffered fresh pillage in the raid which occurred in 1096 A.D. At the time of the patriarch Benjamin II (1327-1339 A.D.) considerable restoration of this monastery was undertaken under the supervision of the patriarch himself. When the traveller Thévenot visited this monastery in 1657 A.D., he reported that, as regards its condition, it was the best of the four monasteries; however, when Père Sicard visited it in 1712 A.D. he found in it only four monks.

Architectural Notice

The Dair Anbâ Bishoi together with the Dair As-Suryân is situated on an elevation which, although considerably above the level of the salt lakes, is actually 5 metres below the sea-level. The Dair Anbâ Bishoi is roughly quadrilateral in shape, enclosed by walls 2 metres in width and 10 metres in height (Plate XVIII). These walls are surmounted by a parapet walk standing shoulder high. Apart from later restoration, they date from the 9th century. The entrance to this monastery is through a gateway near the west end of the north wall. A short, lofty barrel-vaulted passage leads into the interior through a gate house. This building is the most complete example of a gatehouse remaining in any of the monasteries. On the ground floor there are two chambers, and a flight of steps leads up to an upper chamber, the flat roof of which replaces, it would seem, a barrel-vault, such as is found at the Dair al-Baramûs. The present keep which probably replaces an earlier one ruined in the raid of 1069 A.D., is to be dated in the closing years

of the 11th century. It is entered at first floor level by a drawbridge which rests on the flat roof of the gatehouse. This keep consists of a ground floor and a first floor, though there are definite indications that a second floor once existed. Except for measurements and some minor details, this keep is identical with that of the monastery of Abû Makâr, and must, therefore, be considered as contemporary with it. Of the rooms on the east side of the corridor on the ground floor, the southernmost was used as an oil mill as can be seen from the small circular substructure. The central room probably contained the corn mill. On the west side of the corridor the southernmost room was in all probability used for a wine press. To the east of the corridor of the first floor there is a hall with domes carried on piers. This hall answers exactly to the Church of the Holy Virgin at the monastery of Abû Makâr, but there is no tradition among the monks that it was ever used as a church. In the third chamber on the west side of the corridor, the opening in the floor should be noticed, as through it water can be raised directly from the well in the room below. Stairs lead to the roof of the first floor, and here we find the Church of Saint Michael which stands isolated. This church has unfortunately undergone a thorough restoration in recent times, and thereby many points of architectural interest have been obliterated. The body of the church is barrel-vaulted, and the sanctuary screen, though of rough modern work, has above it the same eicons as those seen by A. J. Butler, when he visited the monastery in 1884. There is every indication that this keep had originally a second floor, but that at some time it fell into ruin, and only the church was

saved from demolition. *The Southern Area.* This area is occupied by the monastic church, the refectory and other monastic buildings. The main church is dedicated to Saint Pshoi (Bishoi), the founder of this monastery (Plate XIX). Of the earlier church which presumably occupied the same site no trace now remains, and architectural history begins with the church built after the Fifth Sack of the monasteries, that is to say, between 830 and 849 A.D. To that building belong the northern sanctuary and the substructure of the central sanctuary. The nave of the main church is covered by a single roof, a continuous bipartite vault, which was built in 1330 A.D. In the western half of the nave there is the usual basin let into the floor. The eastern half of the nave has an outer and inner choir, the former being used for the ceremonies of Holy Week. To the north of the entrance to the inner choir stands a wooden pulpit which has been assigned to the 14th century. As regards the aisles, their barrel-vaulted roofs belong to the 14th century also ; the plan, however, of the western aisle dates from the 9th century. In the south-west corner of the south aisle there is the tomb of the patriarch Benjamin II who undertook the restoration of the monastery in the 14th century. There are three entrances to the choir, one from the nave, a second from the north aisle and a third from the south aisle. The doors of the central entrance should be noticed. The topmost hexagonal panels with their elaborate arabesque in flat relief enclosed within a narrow inlaid fillet of ivory belong probably to the 14th century. The floor of the choir is paved with rectangular limestone slabs and the central square window at the north end still retains much of the original tinted

glass in the tracery. Against the east wall of the choir, to the north of the entrance to the main sanctuary, stands a feretory containing the bodies of Saint Pshoi (Bishoi) and his companion Saint Paul of Tamweh. The north sanctuary is entered from the choir by an archway. Though the screen is modern, the doors belong to the 14th century. The interior which is very narrow in proportion to its length, belongs definitely to the 9th century (Plate XX). The roof is a plain barrel vault, but terminates at the east end in a dome. The altar is oblong and has a square-and-circle marble altar slab. The main sanctuary is entered through an archway, the doors of which have panels belonging to the Fatimide period 972-1171 A.D. (Plate XXI). The sanctuary itself is square in shape and dates from the 9th century. The dome is of burnt bricks plastered within and without, and dates from the period of restoration undertaken by the patriarch Benjamin II. The floor is raised one step above the level of the choir, and the altar is further elevated on a platform which is isolated on all sides except on the east, where it runs into the tribune which has six steps. At the back of the tribune there is the usual central niche which was once ornamented with a mural painting. The southern sanctuary is entered from the choir through an archway. The present building constructed probably in the 14th century has replaced an earlier 9th century one. From the south side of the choir of the main church two doors lead into the church of Saint Iskhîrûn. This church comprises a single, large and approximately square body with an apsidal sanctuary, the whole covered by a hemispherical dome which is considerably later in date than the edifice itself, and may be assigned to the

14th century, when this church was heightened and reroofed under the supervision of the patriarch Benjamin II. Apart from this, the church certainly dates from the same period as the central sanctuary of the main church, that is to say, from the 9th century. The body of the church is divided into nave and choir by a skeleton screen of wood, and the latter is cut off from the sanctuary by another screen of indefinite date. There is only one sanctuary in this church, and its floor is raised one step higher than the level of the body of the church. The altar is covered with a rectangular altar slab of marble, and, in addition to an apse, there is an eastern niche with a blocked window above it. A small door to the north of the sanctuary leads into a narrow barrel-vaulted passage which, in its turn, leads into the baptistery which is fitted with a plain, circular stone font, 95 cm. in diameter and 80 cm. deep, set in a block of masonry. This monastery and that of Al-Baramûs are alone in possessing a baptistery. These baptisteries were probably for the use of those parents who wished for the privilege of having their children whom they brought with them, baptized in the holy monasteries, and thereby to acquire for their offspring additional graces. On the north-east side of the main church, and, balancing as it were the church of Saint Iskhîrûn, is a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary and associated also with the name of the patriarch Benjamin. The body of this church is covered by a single barrel vault, and at the north-west angle there is the substructure of a bell turret which was dismantled between 1910 and 1914. The sanctuary is wider than it is deep, and is covered with a dome. The altar is elevated on a platform which is isolated on sides, as in

the sanctuaries of the main church. At the south-west end of the main church there is the church of Saint George which dates from the 11th or 12th century. The east end of this church is divided by a partition wall into two sanctuaries, each covered with a small dome, and each having an altar covered with a rectangular, marble altar slab. This church is no longer used for services, and it is now a store for palm fibre. The refectory lies parallel to the west end of the main church from which it is separated only by a corridor. It is a long, narrow hall, 4.5 metres in width and 27.5 metres in length. The interior is divided by transverse arches into five bays. The central bay is roofed with a fine quadripartite vault of burnt brick, whilst the four other bays have low domes. Down the centre of this hall runs a table of masonry work, 36 cm. high and 1 metre wide. The edges of this table are provided with a raised rim, and on either side there is a very low bench, 12 cm. in height. In the central bay this table is cut into two by a gangway passing from east to west. The date of the refectory must be assigned to the 11th or 12th century (Plate XXII). It is now used only in Lent for the single meal which is allowed to the monks in this season. Along the south wall of the monastery there are ranged the cells of the monks. These cells, as also those to the north of the main church, do not differ essentially from the monastic cells in the other monasteries. In the south-east corner of the monastery there is a large and nearly square building still used, as it has probably always been, as a kitchen and bakery. The interior has four square stone piers carrying arches of dressed stone which support nine domes, of which four have collapsed (Plate XXIII). In the north-east corner there is

a large bread oven, and beyond this building is the millhouse, the only ancient example of its kind which is complete now in any of the four monasteries. The mill proper is a domed room, 6 metres square, and adjoining it are two barrel-vaulted chambers, the one for the storage of grain in baskets ready for milling, and the other for flour. The modern guest house is situated to the north of the main church. *The Northern Area.* This area is free from any building, and has been laid out as a pleasant garden in which there are various trees. A part is reserved as a kitchen garden.

IV. DAIR ABU MAKAR ⁽¹⁾

Historical Notice

This monastery was founded sometime before the death of Saint Macarius the Great in 390 A.D. We know from written sources that after the death of the "Little Strangers" *alias* Maximus and Domitius, Saint Macarius was led by the Cherubim to the top of a rock in the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn, where he was instructed to establish his abode. Below this rock on which his disciples built a church, they set up their cells, and thus was formed the nucleus of the present monastery. On the death of Saint Macarius, his body was placed in a cave near the church which he had built. Three times in the course of the 5th century, the monastic buildings, such as they were, were sacked by the barbarians. In the Third Sack, some of the monks escaped by taking refuge in a tower which by that time had been added to the monastery,

1) *i.e.* Father Macarius. Makâr being the Arabic form of this name.

and which became the pattern for the later monastic keeps. At the time of the Gaianite heresy already mentioned, a new church was built by the Orthodox monks in which they placed the body of Saint Macarius. Towards the middle of the 6th century this monastery acquired great importance from the fact that it became the official residence of the Patriarchs of Alexandria who were not permitted by the Byzantine rulers of Egypt of that time, to reside in or even visit Alexandria, since they refused to accept the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon. After the Arab Conquest of Egypt in 641 A.D., Amr ibn al-As, the general, confirmed the charter by which the monks of this monastery held their endowment. Shortly after this, rebuilding of the monastery was begun. The original church on the rock was abandoned, and a new church was erected at the foot of the rock among the cells, and was duly consecrated by the patriarch Benjamin I (623-662 A.D.). On this new site the existing church of Saint Macarius still stands. By the beginning of the 9th century the Laura of Saint Macarius comprised not only a church and a large number of cells — Epiphanius of Jerusalem (*circa* 800) states that it contained "a thousand cells" (1) — but it was dominated by a fortress. Then came the Fifth Sack and the church and monastic buildings were devastated. However, restoration work was soon begun, and by 830 A.D. the church of Saint Macarius had been rebuilt, and shortly before the turn of the century the Great Church, as well as the Church of Anbâ Shenouti, was likewise restored. However, in the raids by desert Arabs in 866 A.D. and 869 A.D. this

1) Cf. *Epiphanii monachi*, edition Dressel, p. 6.

monastery again suffered pillage, but very soon afterwards, the patriarch Shenouti I (859-880 A.D.) provided the principal church with a fortified wall. The space thus enclosed was fairly large and included cells for the monks, and had in addition towers. There is good reason to believe that much, though certainly not all, of the work of Shenouti still shelters the present Dair Abû Makâr. During the next four centuries further buildings were added to the monastery, and those already existing were improved and embellished. The sanctuary of Saint Mark was probably constructed during the nine years that the patriarch Zacharias (1004-1032 A.D.) spent in this monastery at the time of the persecution under al-Hâkim. At that time, the head of the Evangelist Saint Mark which till then had been preserved at Alexandria, was brought to this monastery, where it seems to have remained until some date between 1051 and 1057 A.D. As this monastery became patriarchal, and indeed many of the patriarchs were chosen from among its monks, it became customary for the patriarchs to consecrate in it the Chrism (Myron), a ceremony which takes place on the Thursday of Holy Week, though not annually, but at such times when a fresh supply of Chrism is required by the Church. From the middle of the 14th century this monastery began to deteriorate, and when in 1656 A.D. Thévenot visited it, he described it as the most dilapidated of the four monasteries of the Wâdî 'n-Natrûn.

Architectural Notice

This monastery is an irregular quadrilateral construction enclosed by walls which have an average height of 14 metres. There are definitely traces that formerly the area of this monastery was much larger than it is at the present time, and this reduction in area was probably the work of the patriarch Shenouti to whom reference has already been made. In the eastern wall there are two gates, the one in the south-east angle of the monastery is, however, now walled up. Over the northern gateway there is the usual upper chamber with a circular hole through which provisions could be hauled up without the necessity of opening the gate. There are, however, no other remains of a gatehouse.

As regards the area enclosed by the walls, it is divided into two nearly equal parts by a mass of buildings whose general direction is east to west. *The Northern Area.* The keep of this monastery is one of the most developed specimens of its class, and it is in plan roughly 21.5 metres square and over 16 metres in height (Plate XXIV). It is entered at first floor level by means of a narrow drawbridge. The interior consists of three floors, basement, first floor and second floor. The basement has a number of chambers, but as the windows of these are for the most part blocked, they are dark and have become the haunt of bats. A corridor runs through the first floor, and in its east wall there are two doorways which lead into a large hall which is now the chapel of the Holy Virgin Mary. This hall was originally, it would seem, a reception room for guests. The screen which marks off the nave is made up of mediæval material. There are

three sanctuaries, and the three altars all stand on one continuous platform. The altar slabs are definitely ancient, and they may have come from the southern sanctuaries of the Great Church, when these were demolished. The sanctuary screen contains 12th-13th century material. Of the three chambers on the west of the corridor, the central one is interesting, as it contains the monastic winepress. A stairway leads up from the first floor to the second floor which has also a corridor running through it. On the west of this corridor there are three chambers, and on the east of it there are two chapels and a church. The first chapel is dedicated to the Hermits (as-Suwwâh). Its interior is a plain rectangle with a skeleton choir screen. The mural decorations of the north wall are worthy of note. The paintings are the work of an Abyssinian priest who executed them in 1517 A.D. The persons depicted are, from east to west, the following : Saint Samuel, the Hegoumenos ⁽¹⁾ of the Monastery of Kalamûn, Saint John the Hegoumenos, Saint Onuphrius, a nude figure with a long beard reaching below the knees, Saint Abraham ⁽²⁾, Saint George ⁽²⁾, Saint Apollo, Saint Apip, Saint Misael and Saint Figimi. The sanctuary screen dates probably from the Turkish period. The altar is of masonry, and it has a square-and-circle altar slab which does not fit exactly the substructure, and therefore has come from another dismantled sanctuary. The next chapel is dedicated to Saint Antony. At present there is no screen dividing the nave from the choir, but there are traces that one once existed. On the north wall there are three paintings by the same Abys-

1) *i.e.* Abbot. 2) These were contemporaries of Saint John the Hegoumenos (7th century).

sinian artist, and from the faint traces of colour beneath the whitewash it would seem that the whole length of the wall was once covered with paintings. Of the surviving paintings the figures are, from east to west, as follows : Saint Antony, Saint Paul the First Hermit, and Saint Pachomius, the Founder of the Rule of Community Life. The sanctuary screen is of panelled woodwork. The next division of the eastern part of this floor contains the church of Saint Michael which is a patriarchal church (Plate XXIV). In plan it is a rectangle with an extension at the west end. The body of the church is divided into nave and aisles by rows of marble columns. The western annex is separated from the nave by a screen. The walls of the south aisle have a series of paintings of warrior saints. The figures, from east to west, are as follows : Saint Eusebius, Saint Basilides, father of Saint Eusebius, Saint Macarius, brother of Saint Eusebius, Saint Justus the General, Saint Apoli, son of Saint Justus, and, lastly, Saint Theoclia, wife of Saint Justus. On the north wall there is a fine painting of Saint Michael the Archangel, and slightly eastwards a small figure, possibly a picture of Saint Hilaria, daughter of the emperor Zeno. The sanctuary screen is very fine work, but, unfortunately, it is much damaged and has lost much of its ivory inlaid work. It dates probably from the late 15th century (Plate XXV). The altar has a square-and-circle altar slab which is inlaid in the surface of the masonry substructure. In the eastwall there is a deep niche. Against the south wall of the sanctuary there is a large wooden reliquary in which are preserved the bodies of eight Patriarchs of Alexandria. In its present state the keep dates, most probably, from the last quarter of the 11th cent-

ury. The Church of Saint Macarius was originally very much larger than it is at present, and this is known from written sources (Plate XXVI). The reason for this is, that, since the number of the monks became greatly reduced, those who remained either did not wish to maintain the original dimensions of the church, since it was too large for them, or were unable to provide the necessary material for restoration, and in consequence, those parts which needed repair were allowed to fall into ruin. This church was consecrated by the Patriarch Benjamin I, about 655 A.D., that is to say, about fifteen years after the Arab Conquest of Egypt. The entrance is spanned by a once wide and lofty arch slightly pointed, but the raising of the floor of the church has deformed the opening. The painted medaillons on the arch should be noticed, for they are important, and date possibly from the middle of the 11th century. The subject is the embalmment and burial of Christ and His appearance after His Resurrection. According to a Coptic tradition, the disciples took the myrrh and aloes used by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea for the embalmment of Christ, and from them made the first Chrism with which those converted to the new Faith at Pentecost were anointed. It was here in this sanctuary, in mediæval times, that the Chrism was always consecrated by the patriarch. The original sanctuary screen was burnt by a discontented monk during the patriarchate of Gabriel II (1131-1146 A.D.). The new screen was superseded in its turn by another in the Turkish period, and this was pulled down in 1911. The interior of the sanctuary is an exact square slightly exceeding 8 metres. Up to 1911 the altar stood on an isolated platform, but when the floor-level was

raised, it was reconstructed. In the cavity at the back of the altar the Chrism consecrated on the Thursday of Holy Week, is placed till the third day of Easter. At the east end of the sanctuary is a tribune of three straight steps extending the full length of the wall, and behind the centre of the tribune is an apsidal niche headed with a pointed arch cased in wood. The damaged fresco portrays the Ascension in which we may see the Holy Virgin surrounded by the disciples gazing upwards. Two angels support a mandorla in which Christ, now quite effaced, ascends to the heavens. The stucco tracery of the windows now blocked should be observed. In the north, south and east walls each blank space between the windows and at the ends of the wall is occupied by a small painting of one of the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse. Each figure has a crown and halo and is seated on a jewelled throne and holds a vial in his hand ⁽¹⁾. On the west wall there was originally a series of large standing figures, of which only two have partially escaped the modern plasterer. Each figure stands in a panelled architectural frame consisting of a pair of columns supporting a rounded arch with a small window in either spandel. The first figure is Saint John the Baptist. He is clad in a dark red tunic, girt by a belt at the waist, and the white-edged mantle of yellow-brown is closed across the breast. He points with the extended forefinger of his right hand to an oval cartouche in his left hand, which contains a picture of a horned ram, with the inscription in Coptic "The Lamb". The name of the second figure is illegible ; it may possibly be the

1) Cf. *Apocalypse* IV, 4.

prophet Elijah (Elias). All these paintings are to be assigned to the 9th century. The painting in the triangular soffit beneath the dome should be particularly noticed, as it represents the Coptic conception of the Cherubim. This Cherubim is designed on the model of the "Living Creatures" seen by the prophet Ezechiel (1), and described also in the Apocalypse (2). The head is human and surrounded by a halo ; the body is oval and provided with two hands and wings, and it terminates in an egg-shaped tail. The edges of the wings have eyes. From the left shoulder projects the head of a bull, from the right, that of a lion, above the top of the halo can be seen the head of an eagle, and between the halo and the left wing there is a second human head (Plate XXVII). The dome which is pointed was once covered with paintings. This sanctuary was restored by the Patriarch James about 830 A.D., and this is the date which we must assign to the principal edifice. This building is the earliest dated monument in Egypt in which the pointed arch occurs. The Southern Sanctuary was known in mediæval documents as the Cell of the Council. Originally it was a lateral sanctuary of the church of Benjamin. The Northern Sanctuary is the 11th century sanctuary of Saint Mark. It consists of two parts, the sanctuary proper and a small western annex. The sanctuary screen is modern, and the interior of the sanctuary is nearly a square. The reconstructed altar stands on a slightly raised platform, and behind the altar is a narrow step running the whole length of the east wall, but now submerged by the modern floor. There is a deep niche in the east wall, and at

1) *Ezechiel* I 5-11. 2) *Apocalypse* IV 6-8.

its north end there is a very damaged painting in which four figures appear. These can be identified by the faint inscriptions above them as the Three Children (¹), i.e. Ananias, Misael and Azarias. The fourth figure is that of the angel who stood with them in the fiery furnace, and who, according to tradition, was the Archangel Michael. The paintings at the south end of this wall are damaged beyond recognition, and those on the north wall represent monastic saints. The octagon is richly decorated with paintings and merits a close study. In the north-east recess there is a representation of the Nativity and in the north-west recess, possibly one of the Falling Asleep of the Virgin. In the spandrels of the eight arches there is a series of paintings. On the north-east side there is the Annunciation, but the scene over the eastern arch is difficult to identify. Above the south-east arch there is the Announcement to Zacharias, and on the south face of the octagon there is on the left side of the arch the figure of the prophet Isaiah, and on the right side, two bearded figures. The scenes over the south-west and western arches are difficult to identify. Of the two scenes above the north-west arch, one cannot be identified with certainty, whilst the other appears to represent Jacob's dream. Over the north arch there is the scene of Abrahams' sacrifice. The present dome is modern and dates from 1911, but it replaced an earlier one.

The Church of Saint Iskhîrûn comprises a transverse nave and three sanctuaries (Plate XXVIII). It is entered by a door in the western wall. Six steps lead down into the church, and this indicates the difference

1) *Daniel* III 25. Spelling of the proper names is according to the Septuagint (Greek) Version.

in ground level between mediæval and modern times, which means that this church is at present nearly 2 metres below the exterior ground. The nave and choir are separated from each other by a partition of masonry which is pierced by three doorways. Two parallel barrel vaults cover the southern ends of the nave and the choir (Plate XXIX). The roof which covers the northern portion of both nave and choir is a magnificent quadripartite vault. Against the north wall there is a late wooden feretory in which are placed the bodies of the three Saints Macarius, *i.e.* Saint Macarius the Great, Saint Macarius of Alexandria, and Saint Macarius, bishop of Tkôou, when this church is in use for services. This part of the church dates probably from the 13th century. The northern sanctuary is no longer used for services, and is without an altar. As regards the central sanctuary, its screen is modern, and the altar has the usual square-and-circle altar slab. In the southern sanctuary there is a curved tribune of four steps. This sanctuary may be assigned perhaps to the 14th century.

In the north-west corner of this monastery there is the Church of the Forty-Nine Elders (Plate XXX). It is dedicated to those monks who were slain by the barbarians in the Third Sack of the monasteries in 444 A.D. to which reference has already been made. This church comprises a vestibule, a transverse nave with choir lying parallel to it, and a single sanctuary. The northern end of the nave is fenced off by a rough wooden grille, and here the floor is slightly raised and forms thereby a kind of low platform beneath which the bodies of the Forty-Nine Martyrs now repose. The nave has a barrel-vaulted roof, and is separated from the choir by an arcade of four unequal bays

and a wooden lattice. The three marble columns should be noticed. The choir is mainly barrel-vaulted, but the space opposite to the sanctuary is covered with a low dome carried on two transverse arches (Plate XXXI). At the north end of the choir there is a modern fere-tory in which are placed the bodies of the three Saints Macarius when this church is in use for services. The sanctuary screen is modern, dating from the middle of the last century, and the sanctuary dome is almost hemispherical with a single window at the base which, however, is now blocked. According to tradition this church was built as late as 1720 A.D., and architectural evidence confirms this, though the massive outer walls suggest that the shell of the church is ancient. It may be that this church has been fitted into the ruins of an earlier building, perhaps, one of the towers erected by the Patriarch Shenouti I (859-880 A.D.).

As regards the remaining buildings of the northern area, the guest house and the adjacent cells are modern. However, the range of cells to the north, east and west, built on ground level are not of recent date, though their superstructure is modern. In the north-west angle of the monastery wall there is a square chamber which is now used for making candles. It appears, however, that this fine room was that in which the Chrism (Myron) was prepared in mediæval times. *Southern Area.* The only definitely ancient buildings which now remain in this area are the room in which bread is made and the refectory. Along the south wall there is the burial vault of the monks. The refectory is a long, narrow hall of five bays of which the two northernmost are covered by a continuous barrel vault lined with plaster. The table

which is of masonry, is very low, being only 47 centimetres in height. The reason for this is probably due to the raising of the floor-level, which may also account for the disappearance of the usual stone bench (Plate XXXII). The table terminates towards the north in a three-quarters circle, and is divided, in the fourth bay, by a gangway. It would appear that this refectory which is remarkably small for such an important monastery as that of Saint Macarius, was once duplicated, as at the monastery of Anbâ Pshoi (Bishoi), by a corresponding structure lying parallel with it on its western side. The date of this refectory appears to be the same as that of the refectory of the monastery of Anbâ Pshoi (Bishoi), namely, 11th-12th century. As regards the bread-making room, it is roofed with a barrel vault pierced in the crown by three circular vents. Its architectural character suggests that it may be a fragment of the earlier refectory.

For those who wish for a detailed study of the history and the architecture of these monasteries, the standard work is that edited by H.G. Evelyn White, *The Monasteries of the Wâdî 'n- Natrûn*, vols. 2 & 3 (published by the Metropolitan Art Museum, New-York, 1932-33), which has furnished much of the information given in the preceding pages and from which the Plates in this Guide have been reproduced by courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum.

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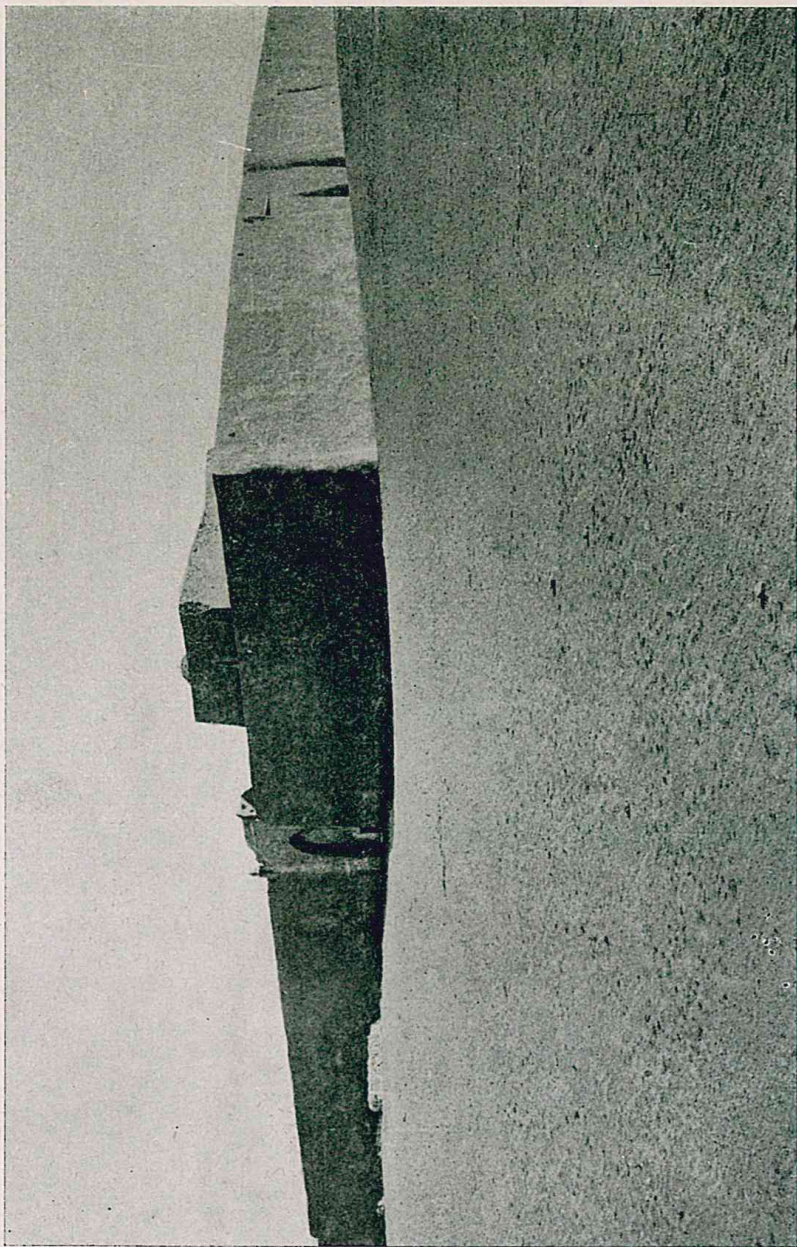
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ACHEVÉ D'IMPRIMER
LE 20 JUIN 1954
SUR LES PRESSES DES
EDITIONS UNIVERSITAIRES D'EGYPTE
41, RUE CHERIF PACHA, LE CAIRE.

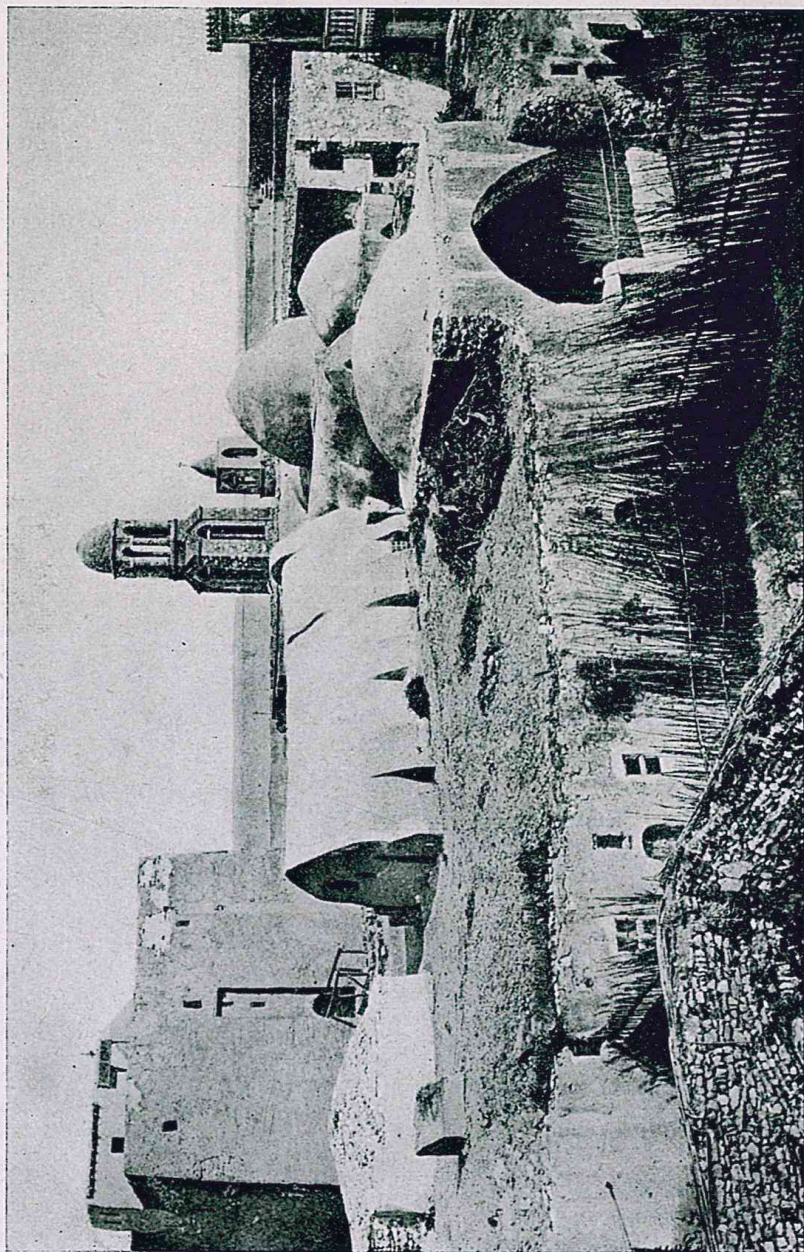
PLATES



North and west walls and gateway of Dair al-Baramûs



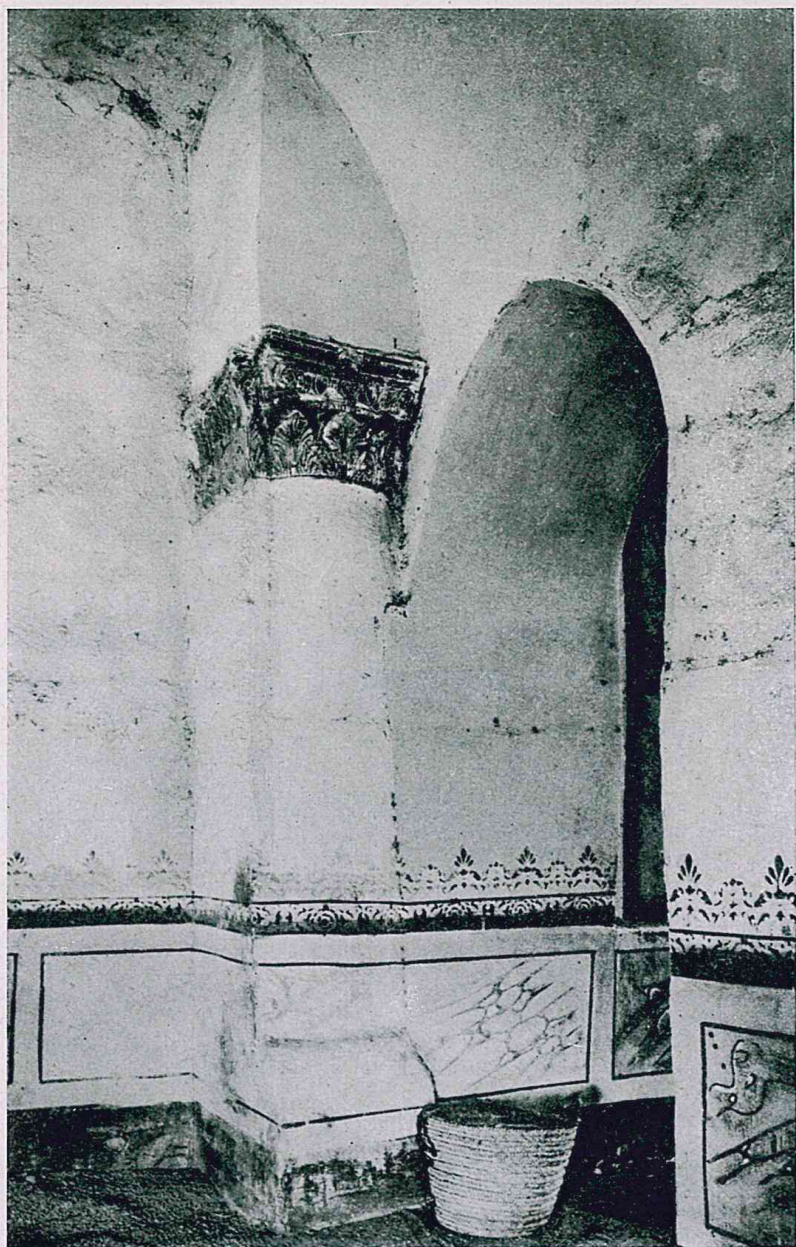
Gatehouse of Dair al-Baramûs



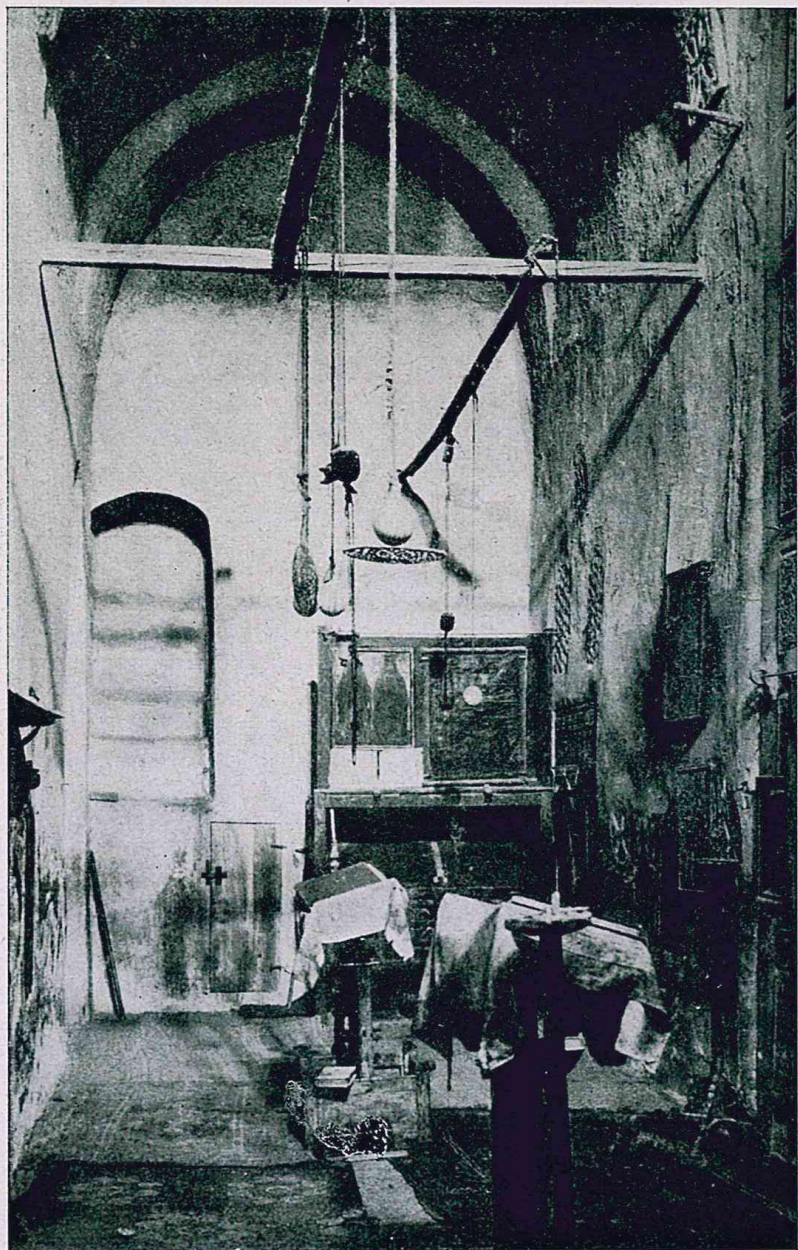
Keep and Church of the Holy Virgin of Dair al-Baramûs



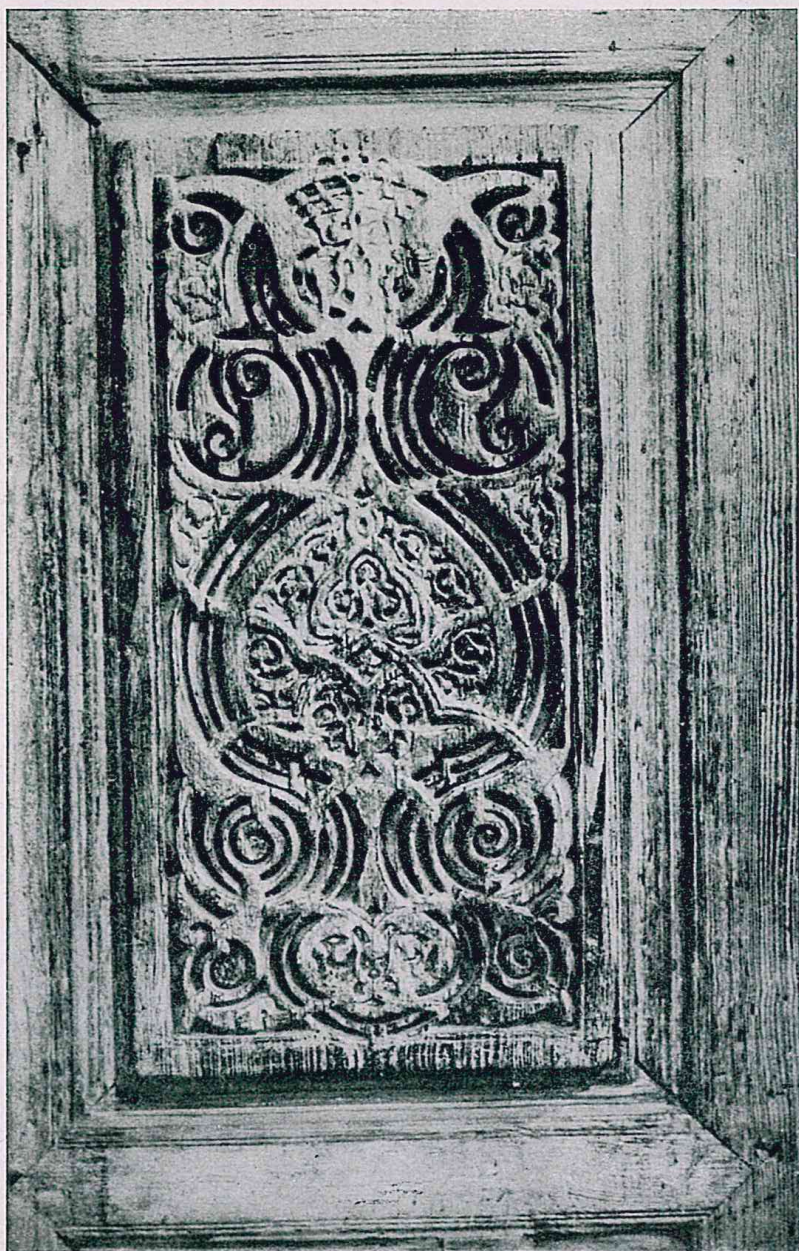
Nave of the Church of the Holy Virgin of Dair al-Baramûs. View facing south-east, showing screen and consecration crosses



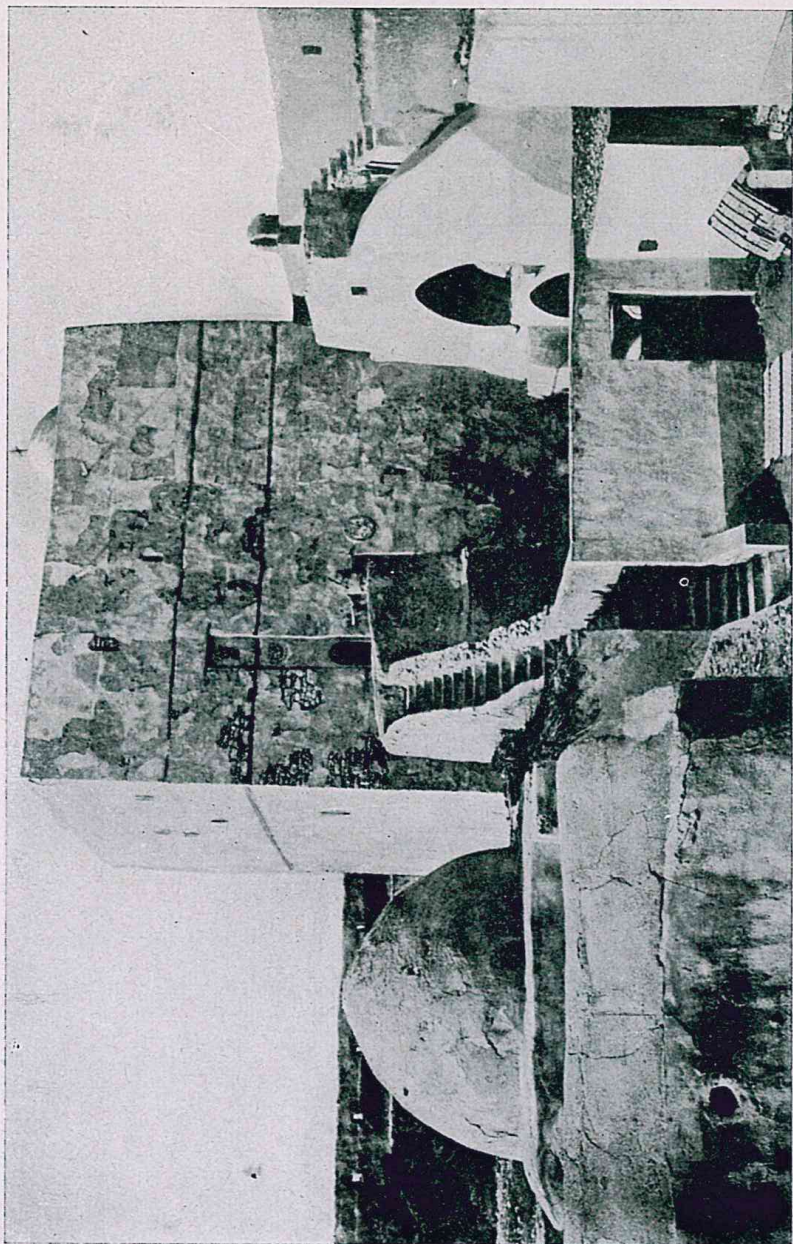
Corinthian style pier in Dair al-Baramûs



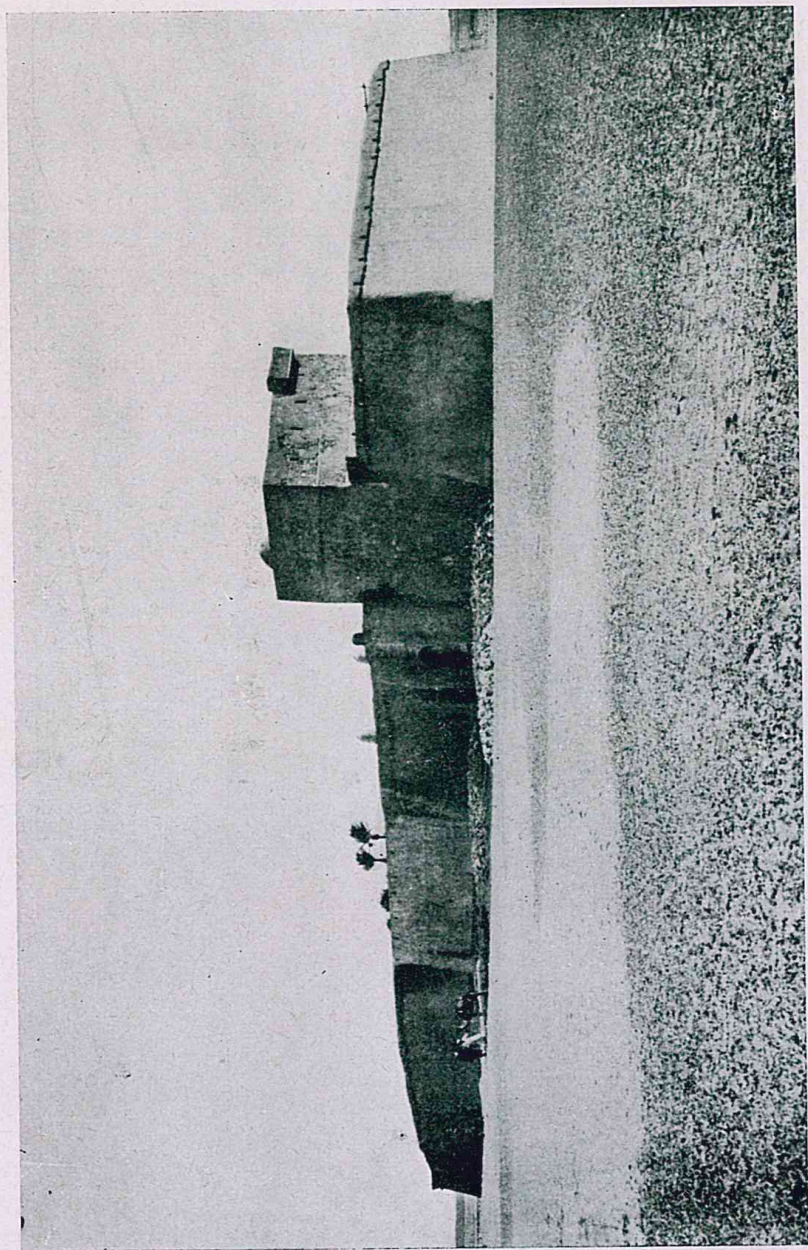
Choir of the Church of the Holy Virgin of Dair al-Baramûs.
View facing north, showing feretory against the north wall



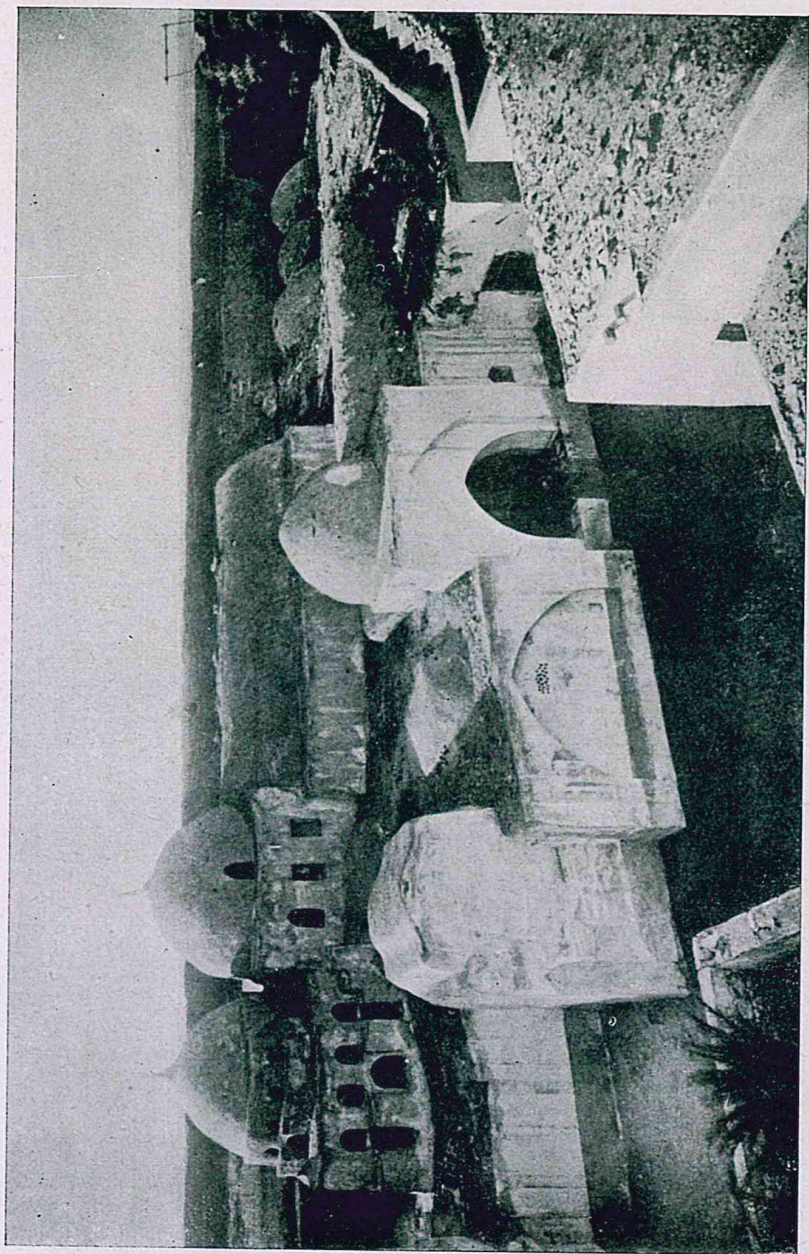
Panel of the sanctuary doors of the Church of the Virgin of
Dair al-Baramûs



View of the exterior of Dair as-Suryân from the north-west



The Keep of Dair as-Suryân. View showing the stairway and the dome of the Church of Saint Michael on the third floor



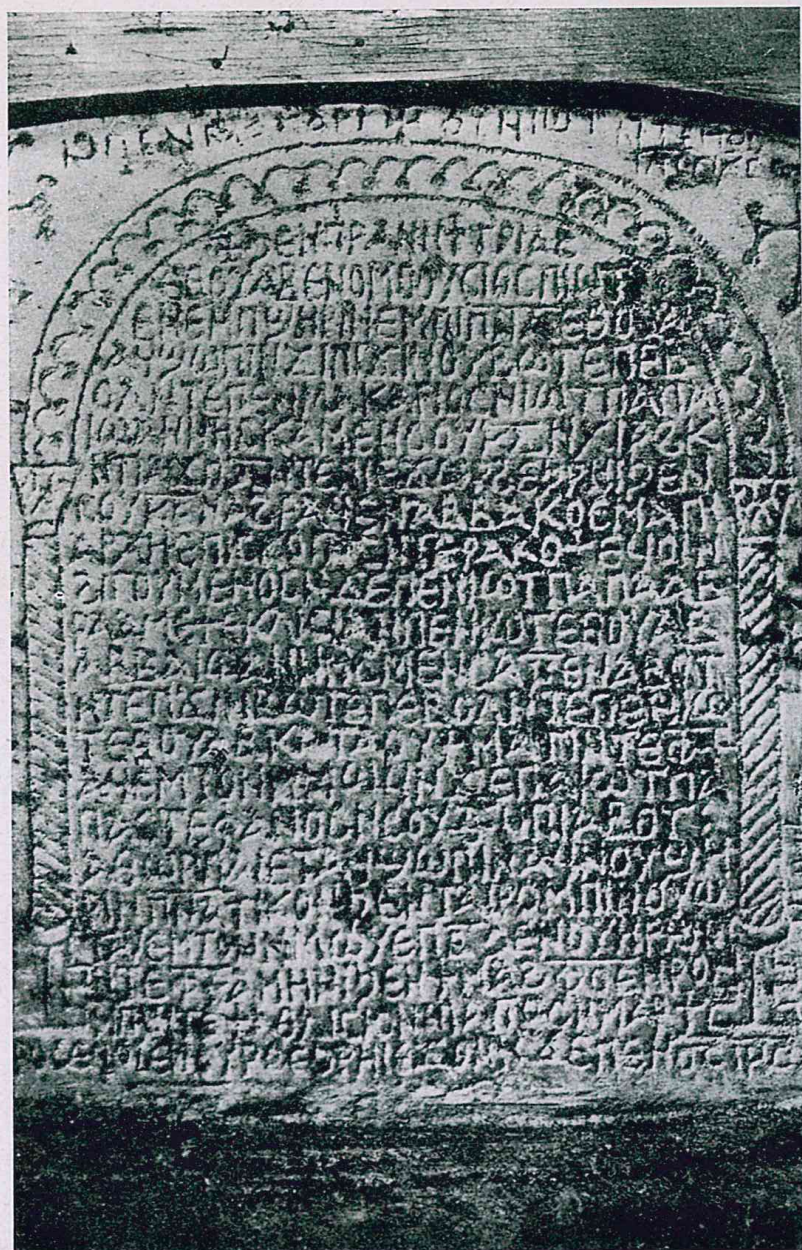
[Exterior of the Church of the Holy Virgin of Dair as-Suryān



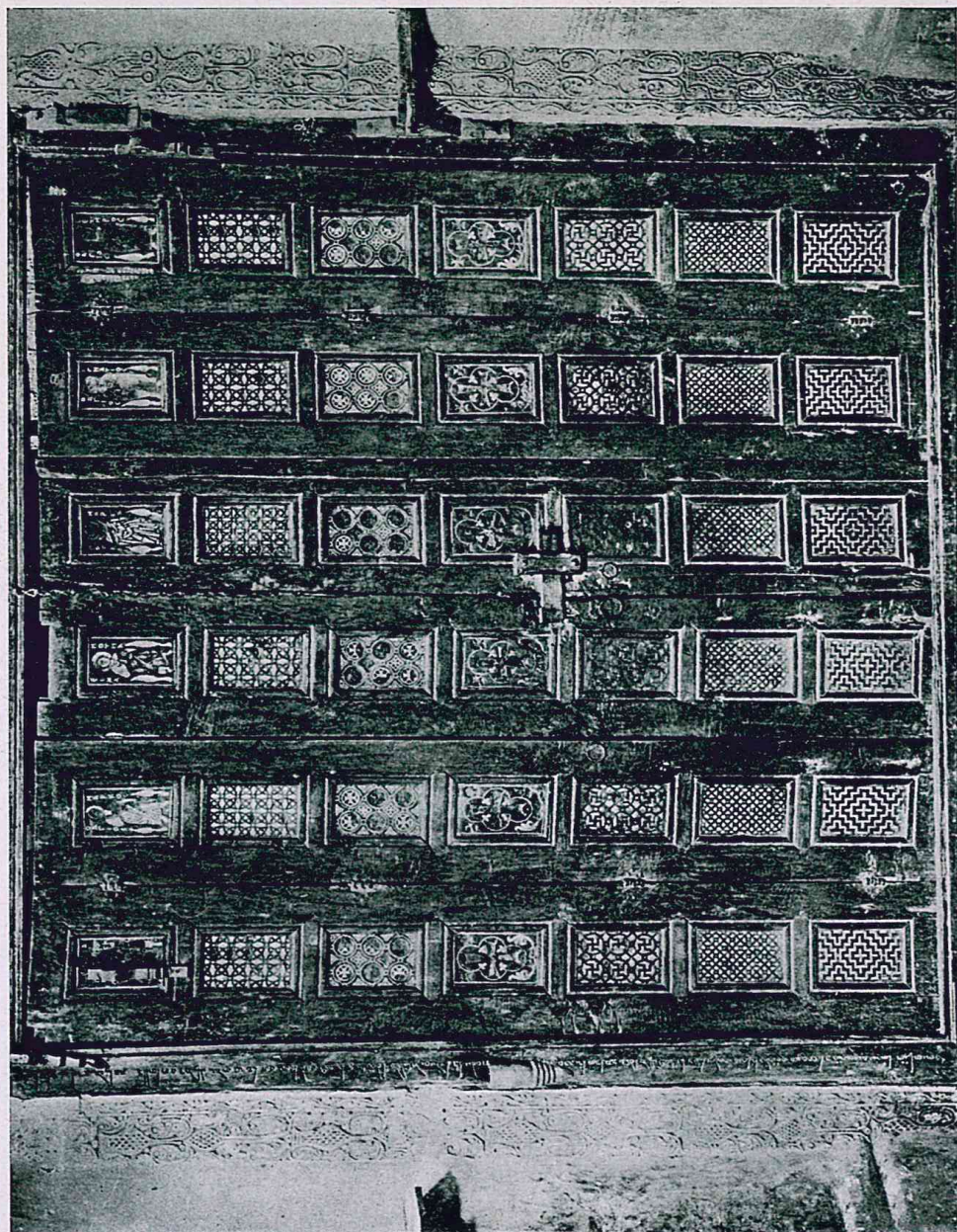
Nave of the Church of the Virgin of Dair̥as-Suryân. View facing east-south-east



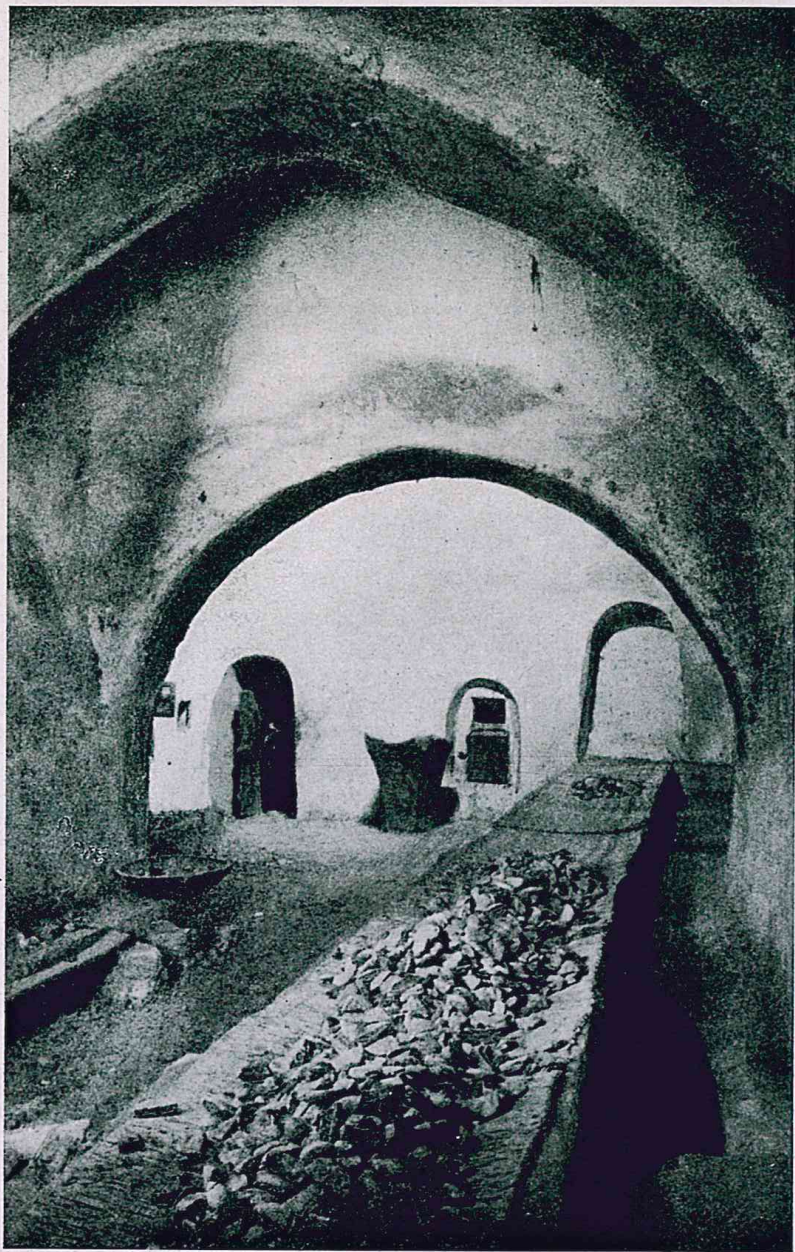
Painting of the Annunciation and of the Nativity in the south semi-dome
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Memorial Tablet of Saint John Kame in the choir of the Church
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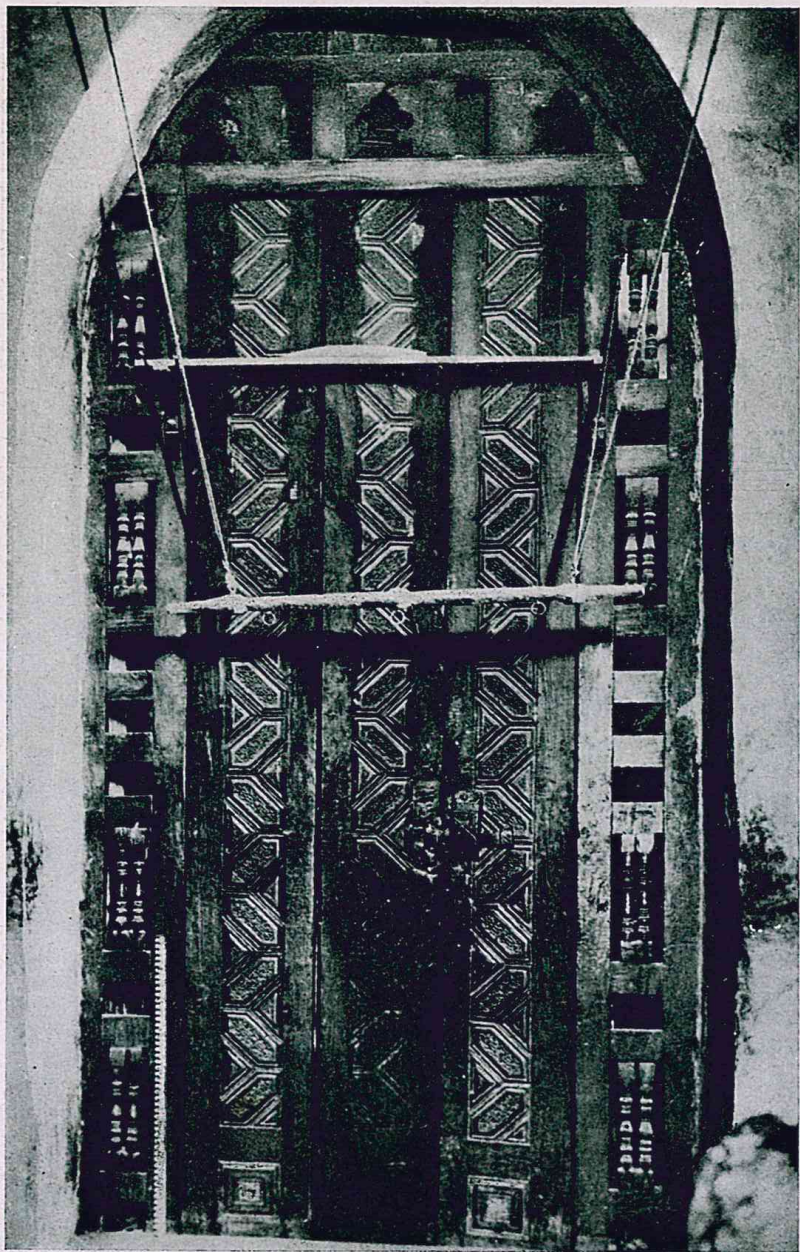
Sanctuary doors of the Church of the Holy Virgin of Dair as-Suryān



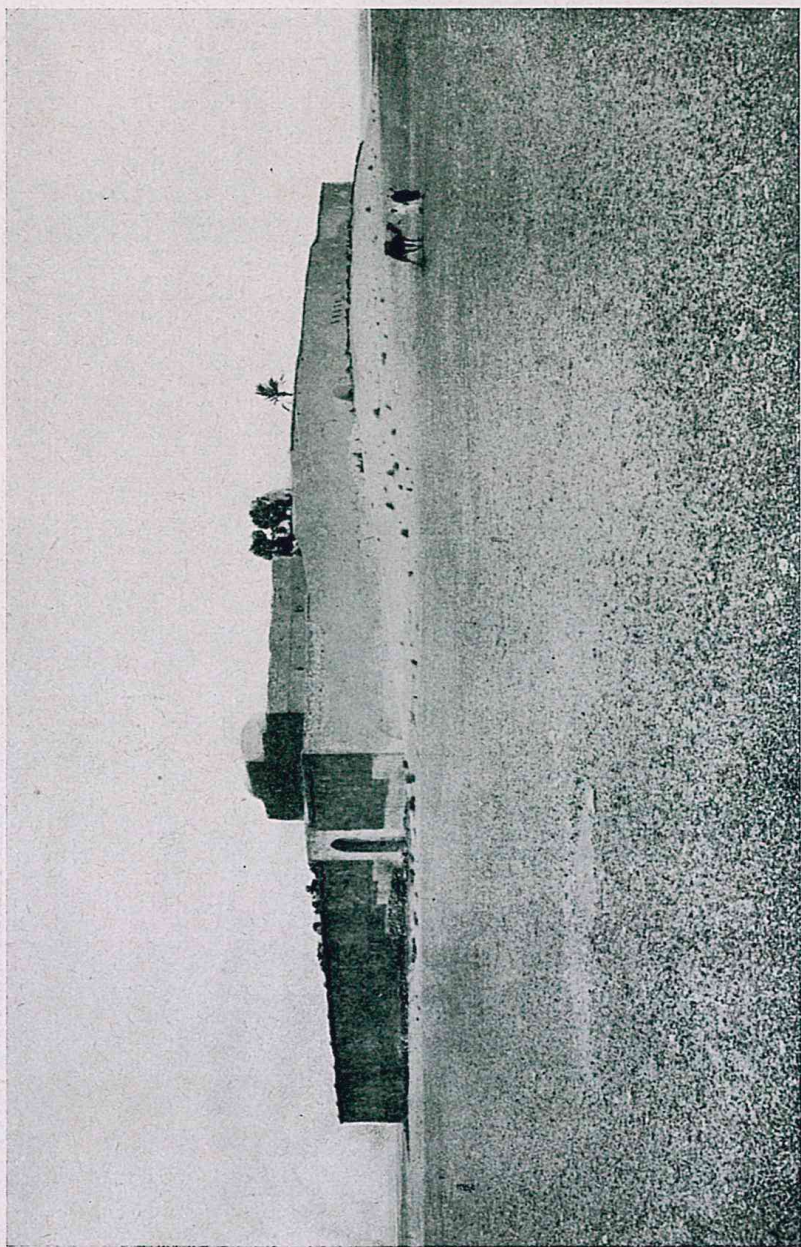
Refectory of Dair as-Suryân. View facing east



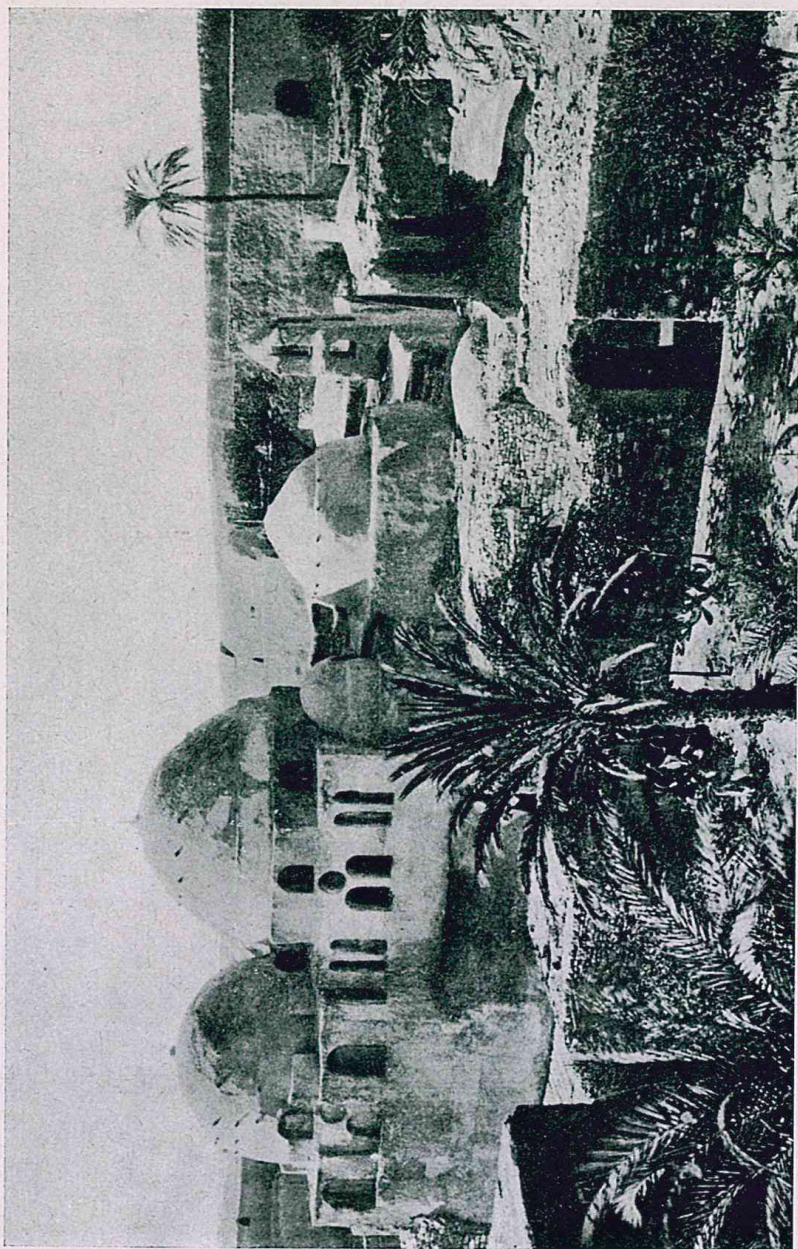
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Choir doors of the Church of the Holy Virgin of Dair as-Suryân



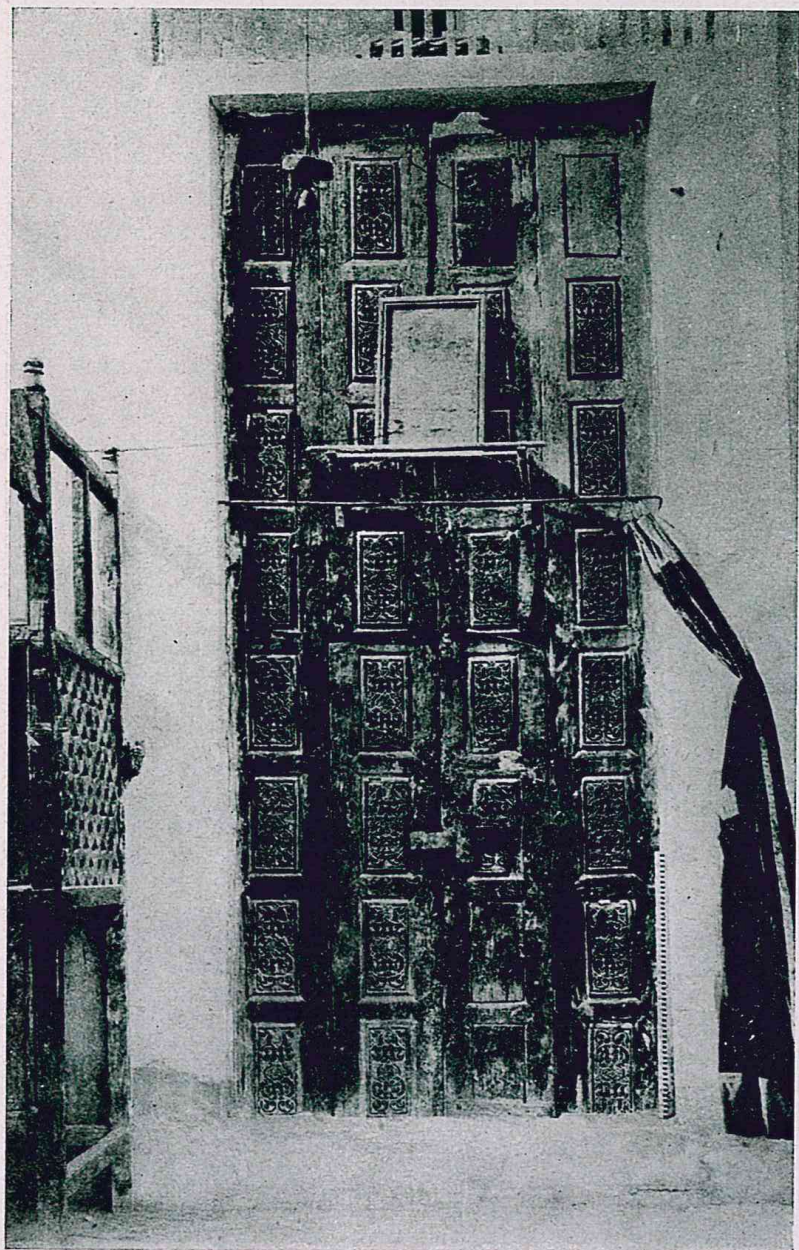
View of the exterior of Dair Anbâ Bishoi from the north-west



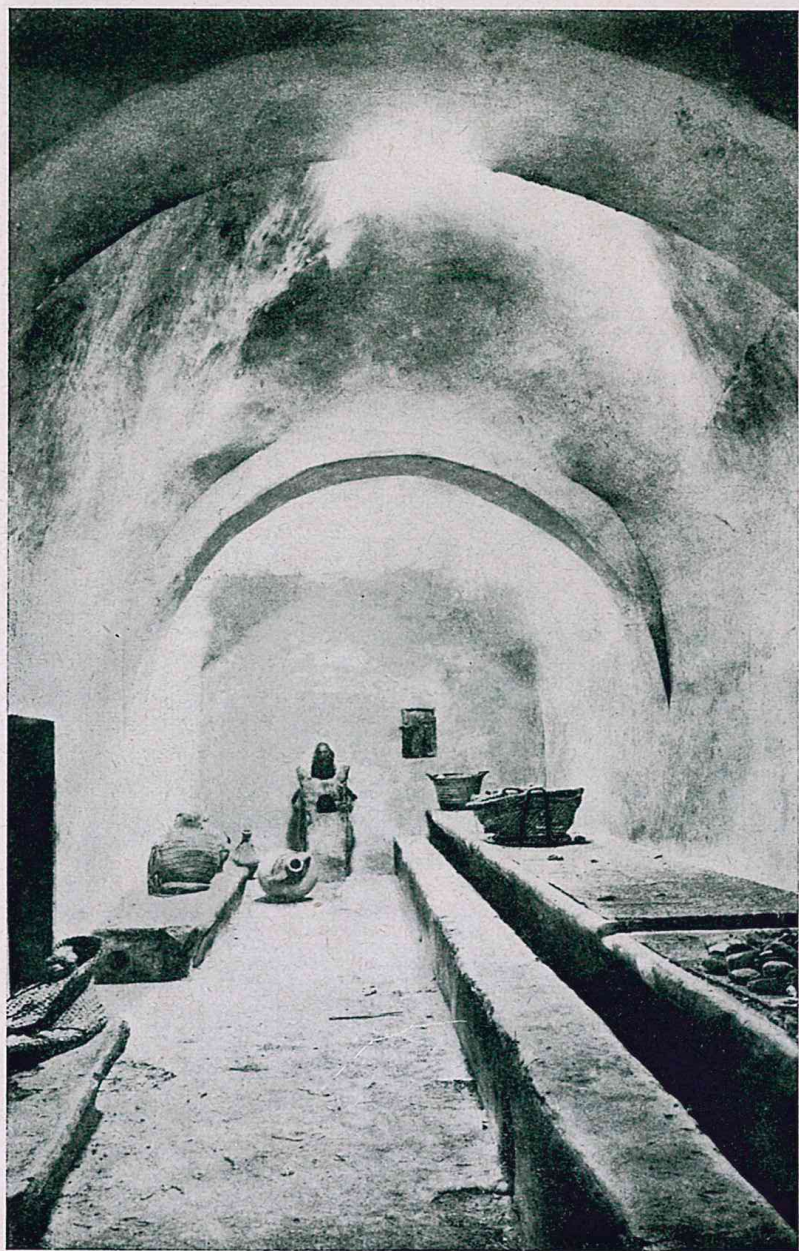
View of the exterior of the Church of Anbā Bishoi of Dair Anbā Bishoi



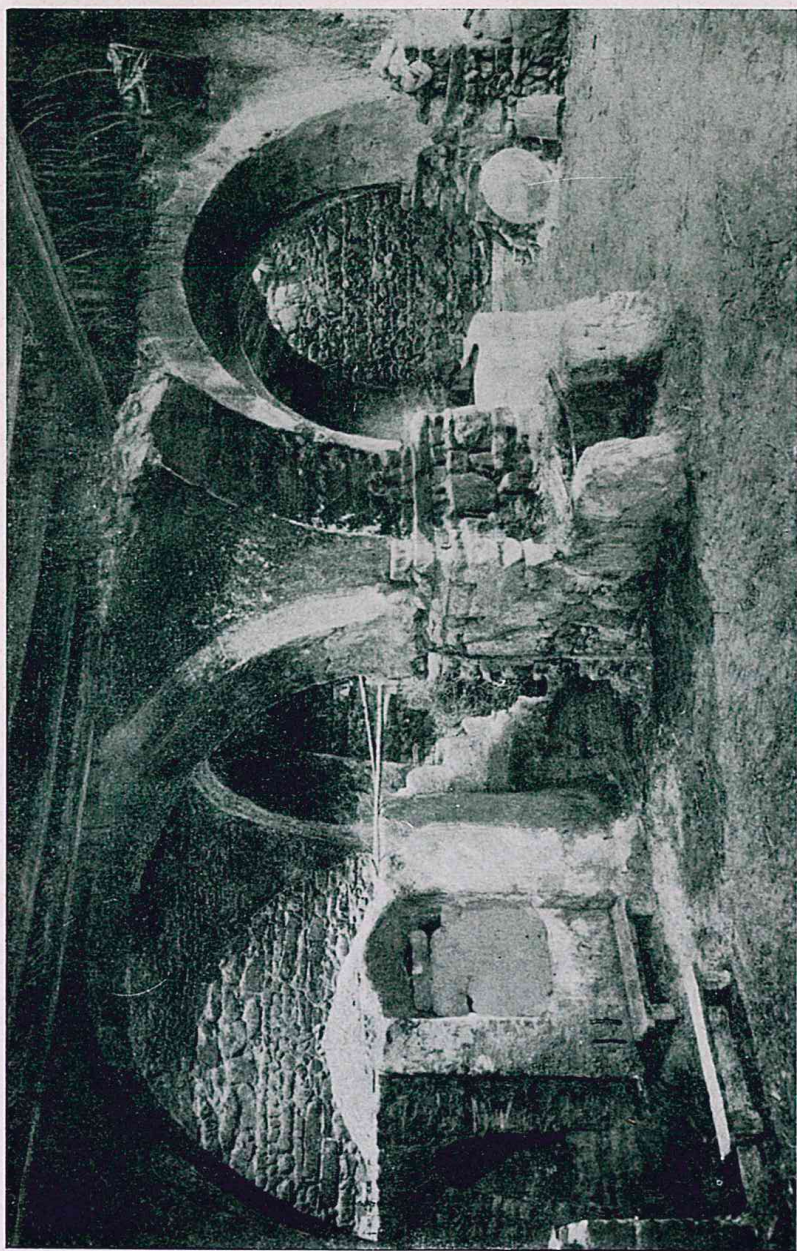
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View facing south-east



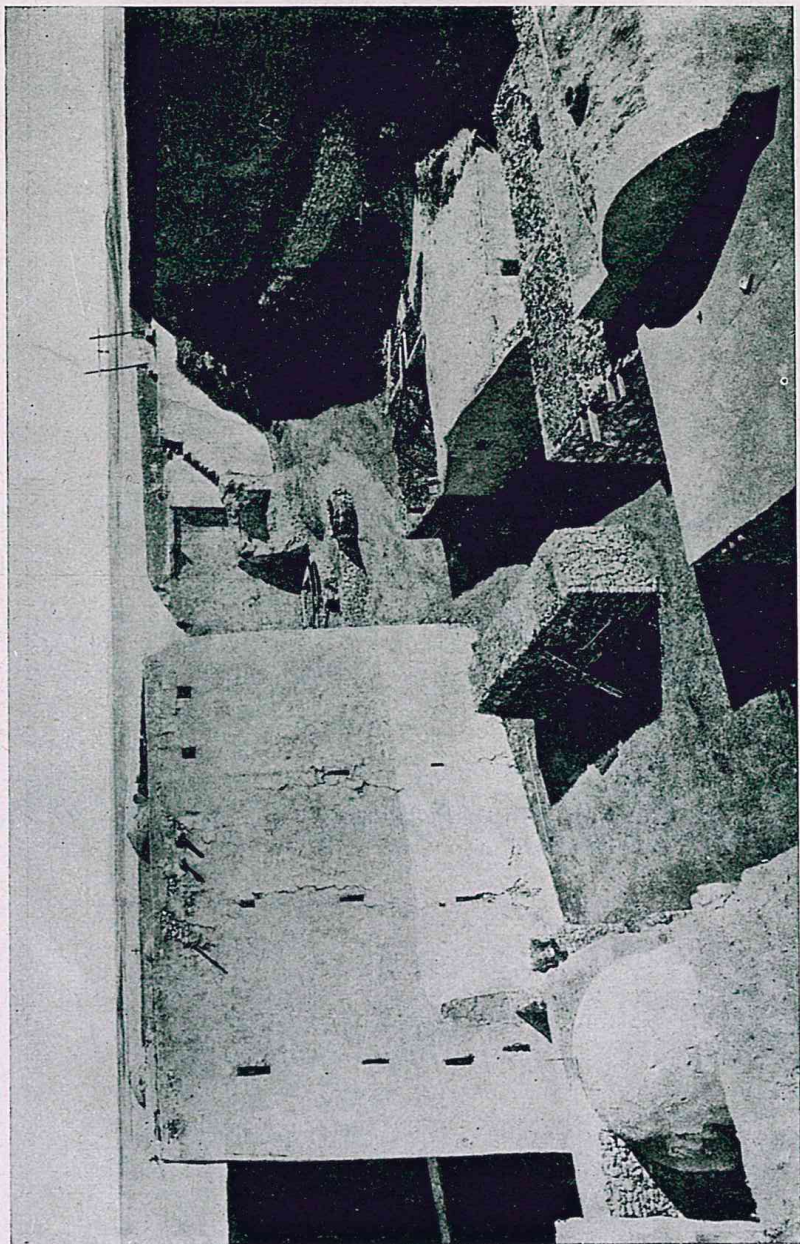
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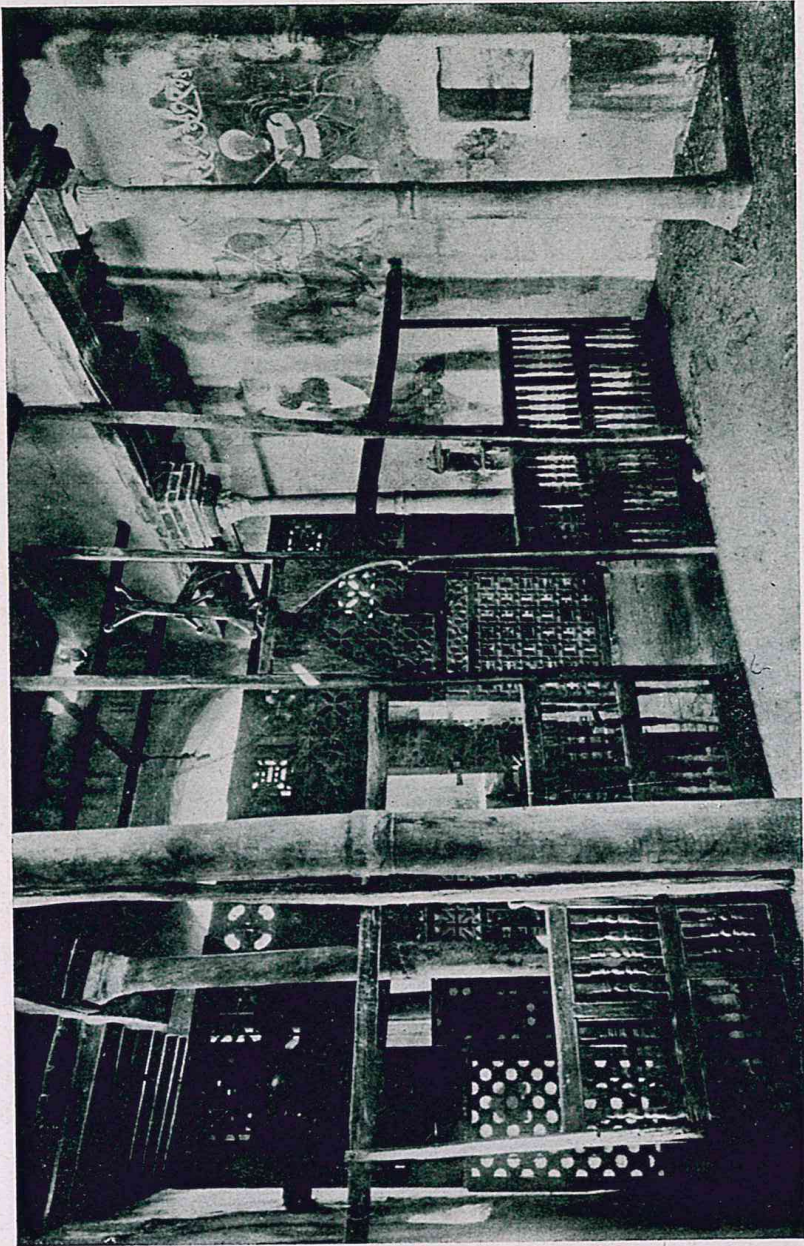
Refectory of Dair Anbâ Bishoi. View facing east



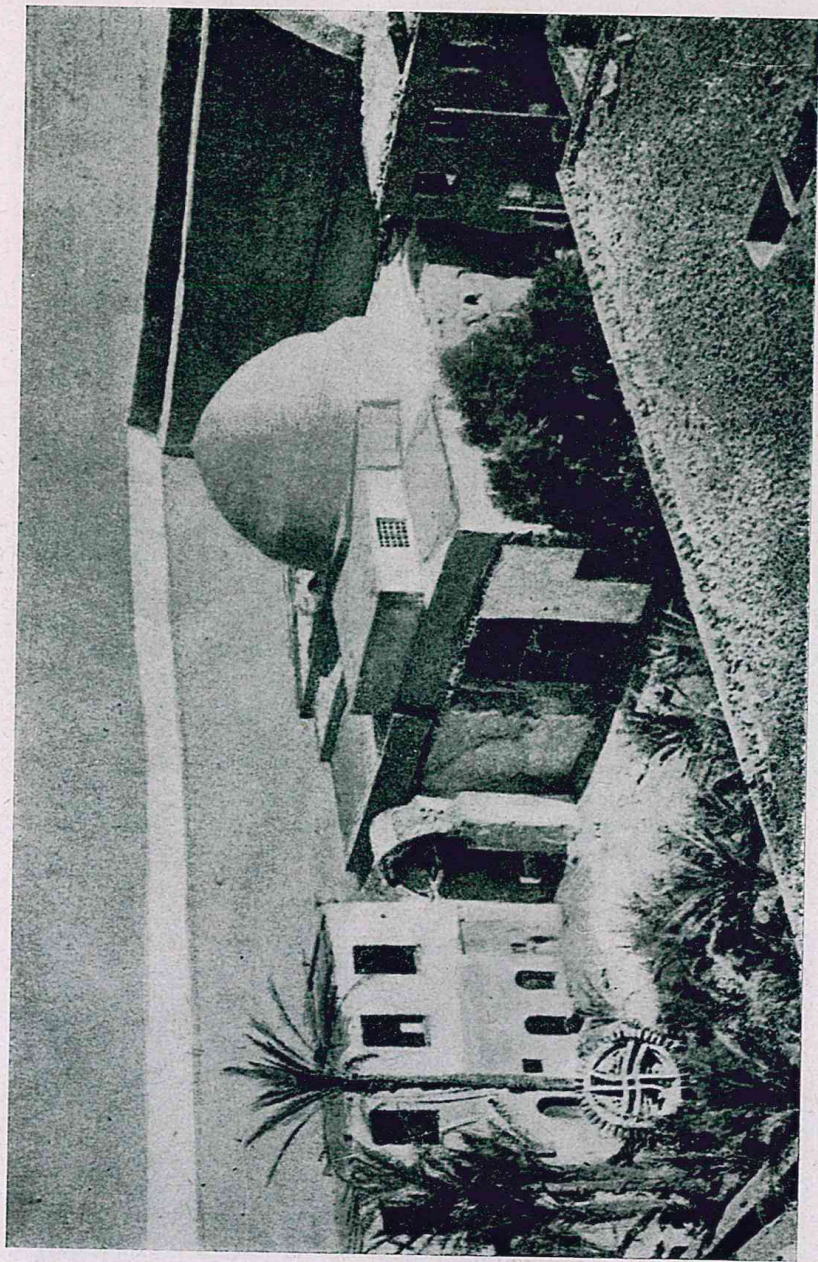
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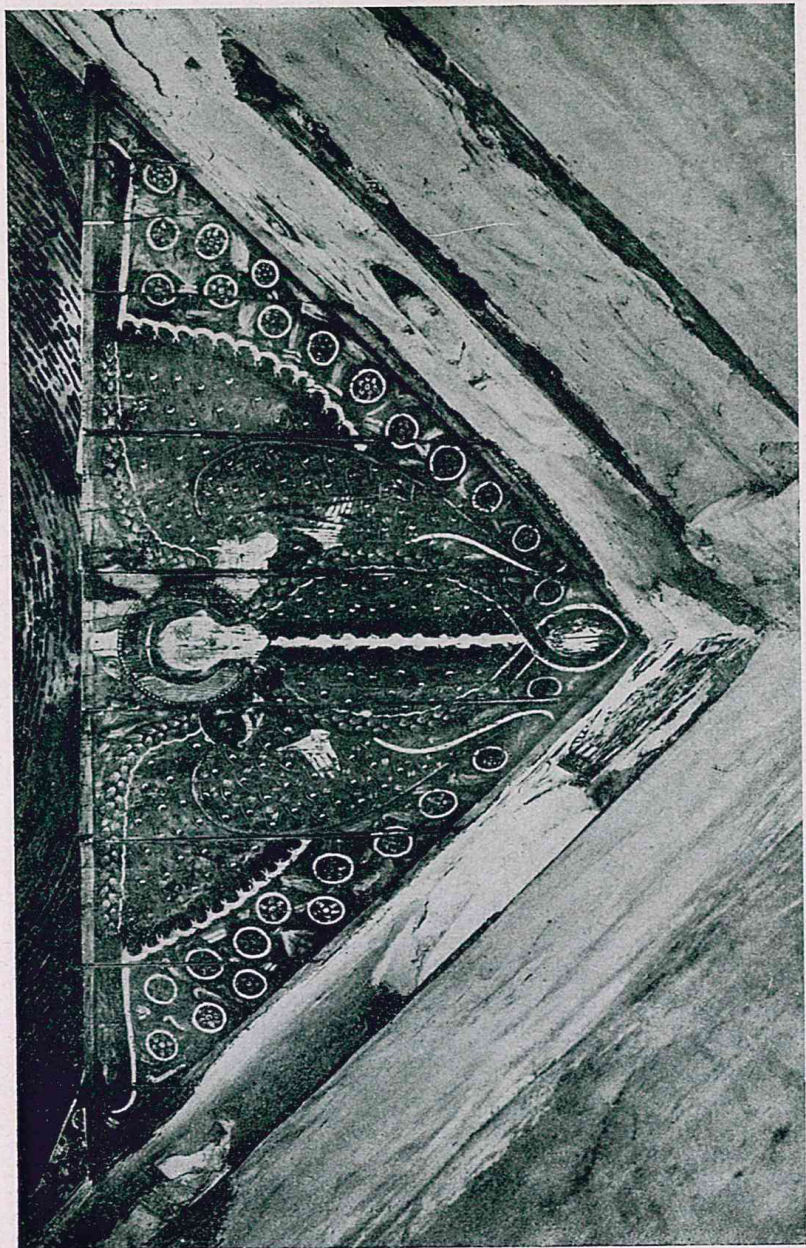
The Keep of Dair Abû Makâr. View facing southeast, showing the dome of the Church of St. Michael on the third floor



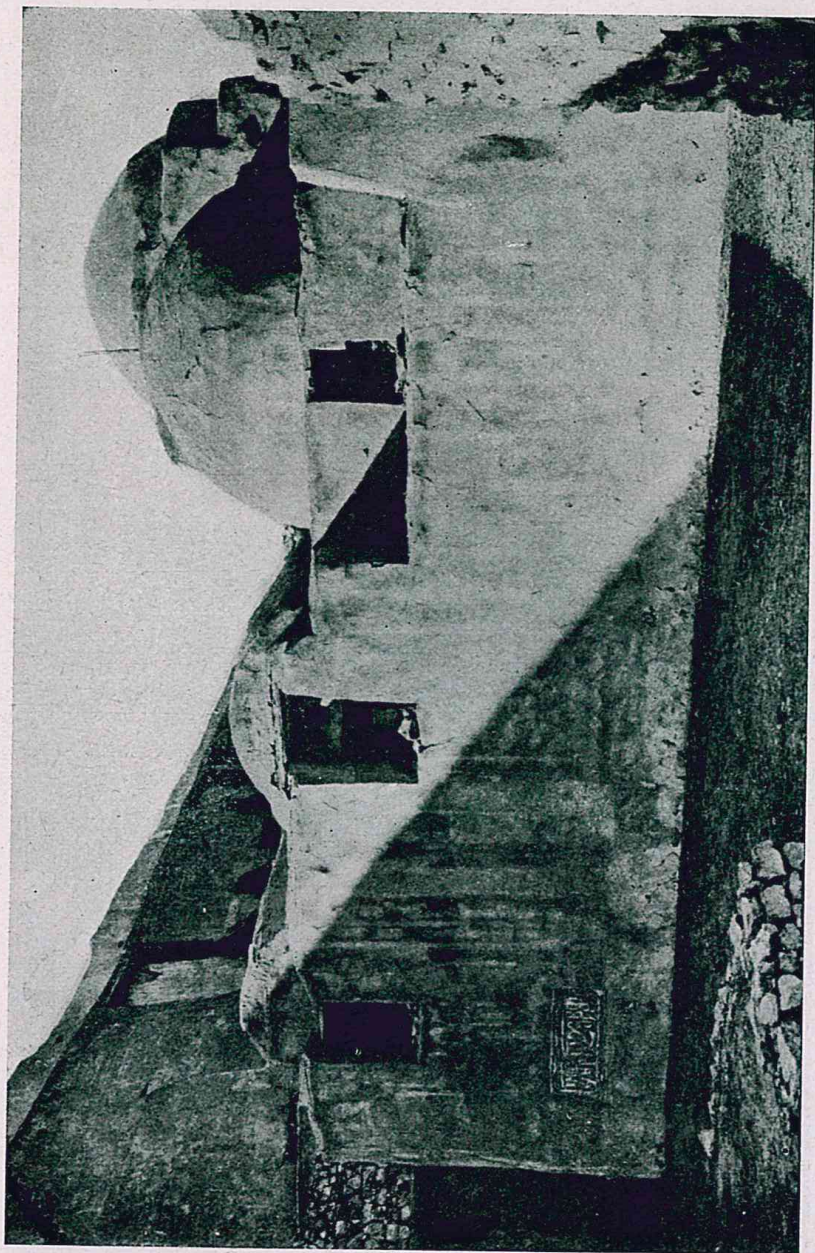
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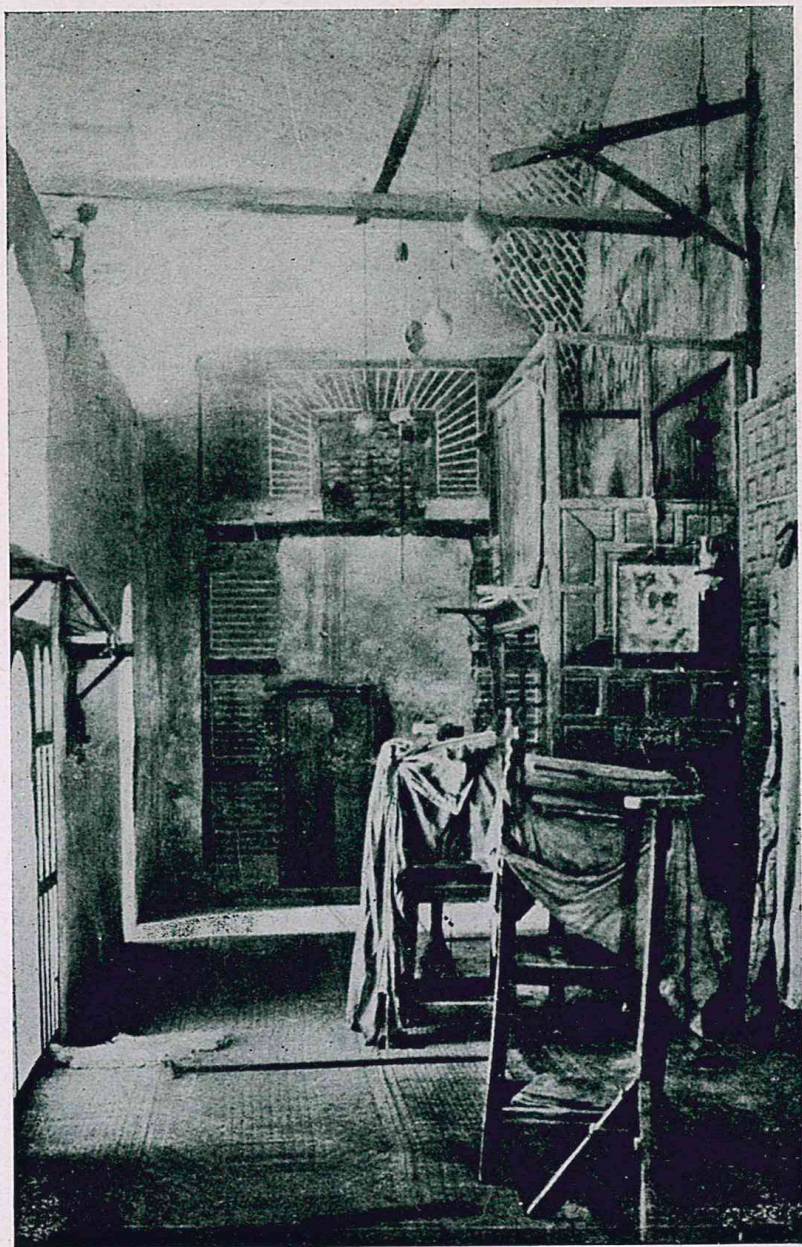
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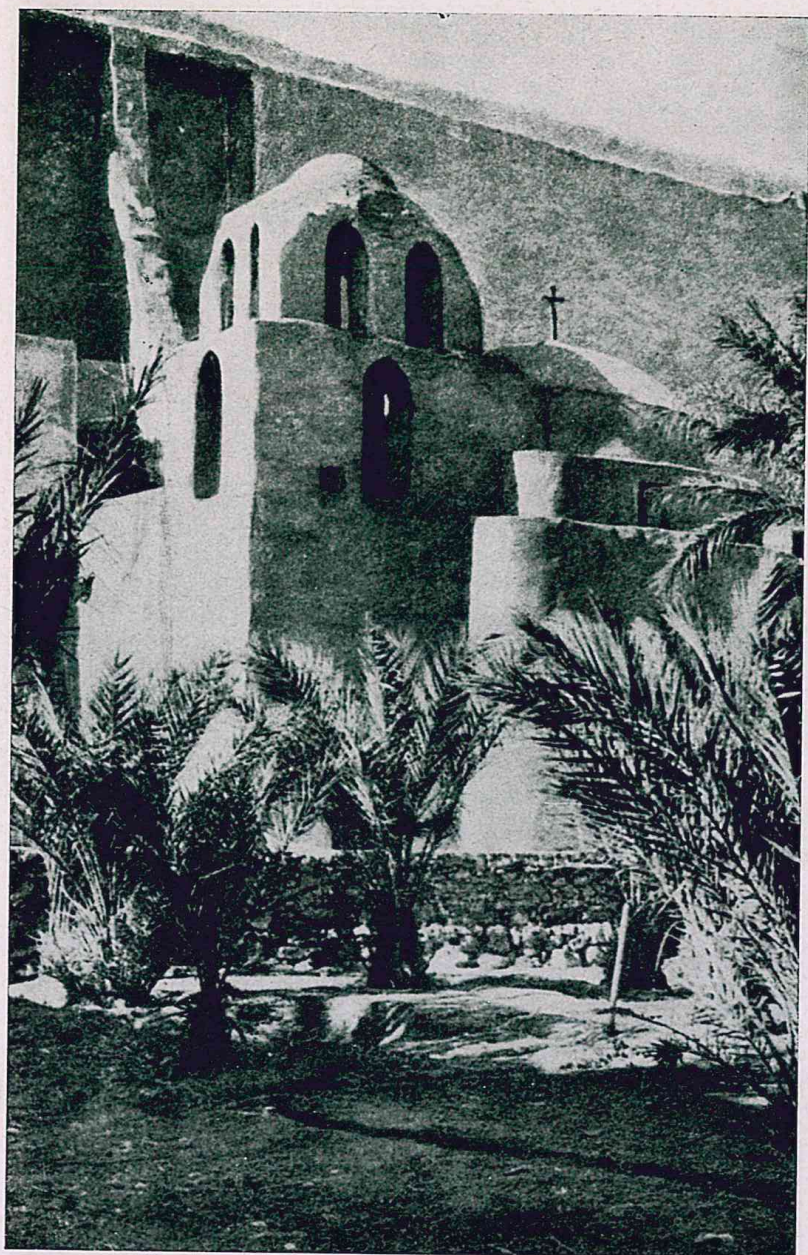
Painting of the "Cherubim" or "Living Creature" in the triangular
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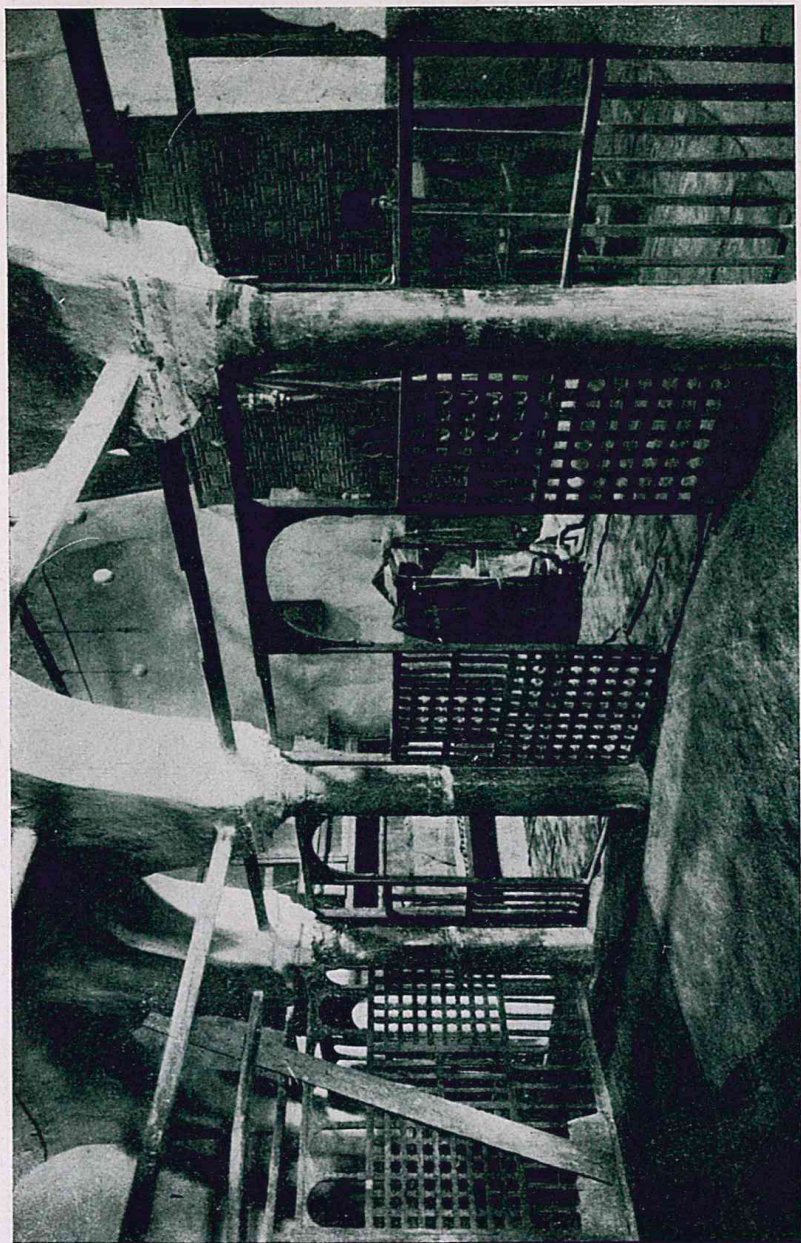
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Choir of the Church of St. Iskhîrûn of Dair Abû
Makâr, facing north



View of the exterior of the Church of the Forty-Nine
Elders of Dair Abû Makâr



Nave and Choir of the Church of the Forty-Nine Elders of Dair Abû
Makâr, facing north-east



Refectory of Dair Abû Makâr



HISTORIC DATES IN EGYPT FROM THE 1ST CENTURY A.D. TO THE ARAB CONQUEST IN 640 A.D.

YEARS

50-58 or in 62	According to tradition St. Mark visited Alexandria, and the See of Alexandria claims him as its founder and first bishop.
180	Catechetical School of Alexandria founded by Pantaenus who was succeeded by Clement of Alexandria some time before 200.
Beginning of 3rd Cent.	Coptic script (Greek alphabet + 6 characters from the Demotic writing) now replaces the Demotic, and a Coptic Version of the Holy Scriptures is made.
250	Persecution of the Christians under the Emperor Decius. St. Paul the first anchorite retires to the desert.
284	Diocletian chosen as Roman Emperor. This year marks the beginning of the Coptic Era of the Martyrs.
285	St. Antony settles as an anchorite in the Eastern Desert.
303	Beginning of the Persecution of the Christians by Diocletian at the instigation of Galerius.
323	St. Pachomius founds the first coenobitic monastery at Tabennesis (modern Denderah).
330	St. Macarius the Great settles in Scetis in the Western Desert.
350	St. Athanasius consecrates Frumentius bishop of Axum. The Church of Ethiopia is thus a daughter church of the See of Alexandria.
391	The Serapeum at Alexandria destroyed by the Christians at the instigation of the Patriarch Theophilus.
431	3rd Oecumenical Council at which St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, secures the excommunication of Nestorius.
451	4th Oecumenical Council at which the See of Alexandria separates from the Sees of Rome and Constantinople.
518-538	Sojourn of St. Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, in Egypt. At this time the union of the Sees of Alexandria and Antioch was effected.
543	The Blemmyes expelled from the Island of Philae.
616	The Persians invade and conquer Egypt.
628	The Persians evacuate Egypt.
639	Egypt invaded and conquered by the Arabs under 'Amr ibn al-'As.

- Sawirus Ibn al-Mukaffa', *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of the Holy Church*, Vol. II, Part III. Edited, translated and annotated by Aziz Suryal Atiya, Yassâ 'Abd al-Masih, Burmester.....En préparation
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