



El-Sourian Monastery

Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt 2008

Acknowledgements

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El-Sourian Monastery

Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt

The Monastery of the Syrians (El-Sourian) was erected as a result of a sixth century schism by Theodosian monks, followers of the doctrines of Severus of Antioch. These monks left the Monastery of St. Pshoi in Wadi al-Natrun, and founded their own monastery nearby. Wadi al-Natrun ("the valley of natron") is a desert depression 50 kilometers long located about 90 kilometers northwest of Cairo and is the most important monastic center in Egypt.

Around 710 AD Syrian merchants purchased the monastery, which was converted for the use of Syrian monks. It was called "the Monastery of the Mother of God of the Syrians". It was sacked by nomads in 817 and restored in 850. The monastery remained predominantly in Syrian hands until the Coptic patriarchal synod installed a Coptic abbot in 1636. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III served as a monk in this monastery and has a cell in the desert outside the monastery walls.

The tower and enclosure wall which still surround the monastery's buildings date from the ninth century. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary dates to 645 AD. The Church has a rich trove of paintings that provide a singular opportunity for increasing our knowledge of Christian art in Egypt. Successful restoration and conservation campaigns, which began in 1991, have led to the discovery of important mural paintings of different periods. Many more are expected to be found in the years to come.



His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Explanation of Figures And Photo Orientation.

This book has been structured to provide the reader with the opportunity to experience the monastery as if one were walking through it. Consequently, the maps on pages 3, 4 and 25 should be used to provide an understanding of where the photos were taken in relation to the monastery as a whole.

Page three provides an aerial view of the overall monastery complex, with an inset showing the details of the area within its walls as well as the area immediately surrounding the walls. This inset corresponds with page 4, which is a map of the grounds within the monastery walls with its major buildings and features labelled.

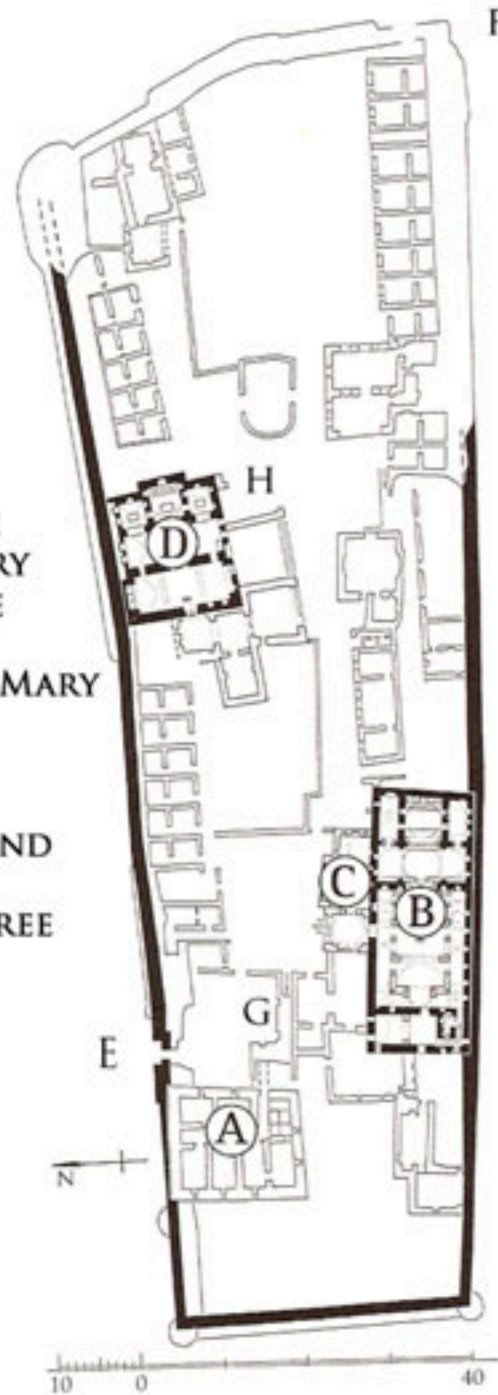
The majority of the photos in this book are provided with a key in the form of a letter, for example (A), to show the reader where the image is in relationship to the monastery as a whole. These letters correspond to the key on the Map of the Grounds on page 4.

Page 25 is a floor plan of the main church, the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary, with major features of the church labelled. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary floor plan uses a combination of the letter B (to correspond with its location on the Map of the Grounds on page 4) and a numbering system, to show where the photos are within the church, for example (B1).



Aerial map of the grounds of El-Sourian Monastery with inset depicting the portions of the monastery within its walls and their immediate surroundings. See page 4 for a key to the locations designated by the letters above.

- A - KEEP
- B - CHURCH OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY
- C - CHURCH OF THE 40 MARTYRS
- D - CHURCH OF ST. MARY (THE CAVE)
- E - NORTH DOOR
- F - EAST DOOR
- G - INFORMATION AND LIBRARY
- H - ST. EPHRAIM'S TREE

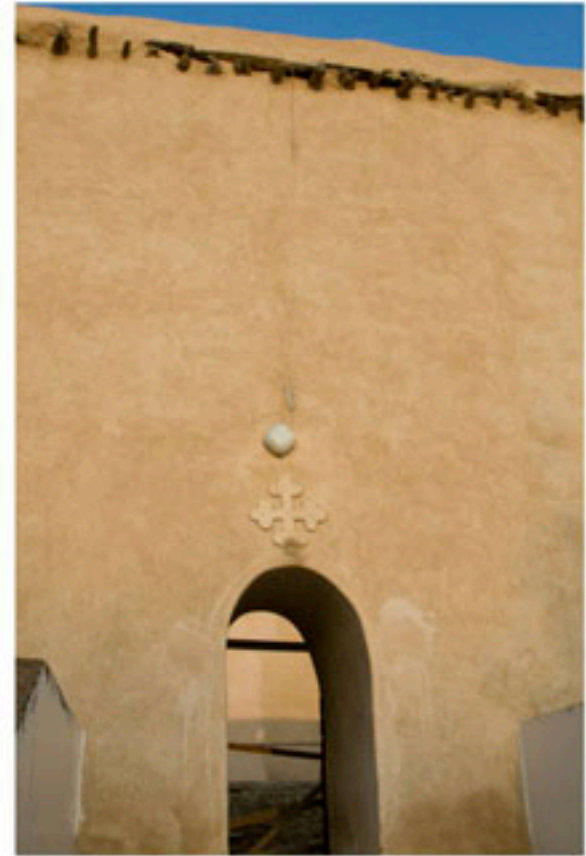


Map of the grounds, corresponding with the map inset on page 3. The key on the left corresponds with the photos on the following pages.

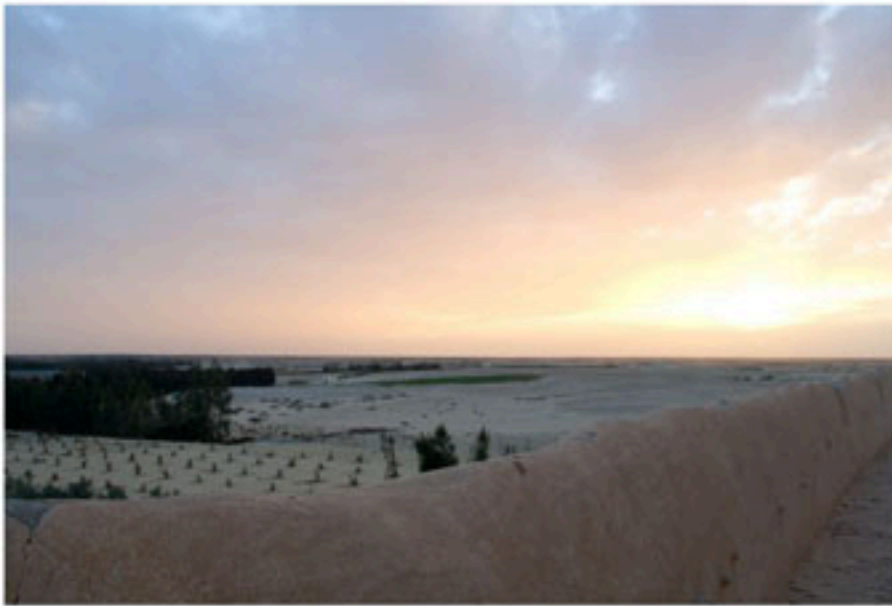


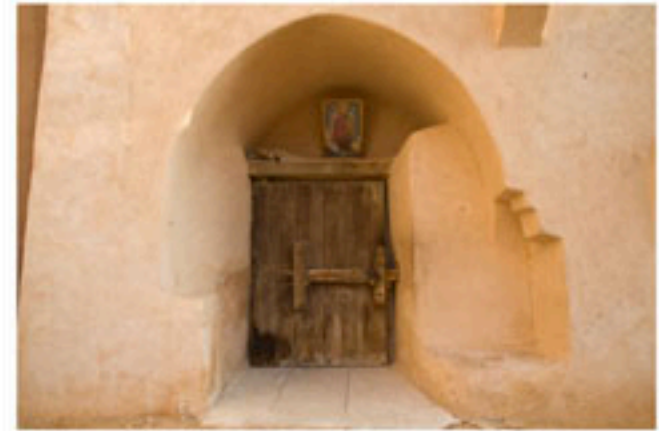
Gate on monastery grounds between El-Sourian Monastery and St. Bishoy Monastery, which is on adjacent land. See Aerial Map on page 3 for location.





Previous Page: El-Sourian Monastery. North wall at sunrise (Area E).
This Page, Left: south wall. Upper Right: east wall entrance (Area F). Lower Right: west wall with guesthouse.





Left and Upper Right: north door in north wall from the monastery interior. Lower Right: exterior of north door in north wall. (Area E).





View of the keep (fortress) from rooftops (Area A). 11





Detail above door to keep, upper drawbridge (Area A).





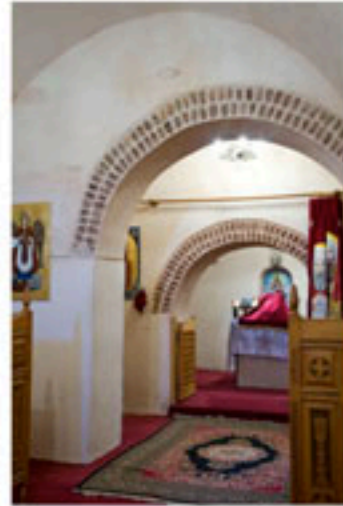
Chapel on second floor of keep with altar screen and altar (Area A).

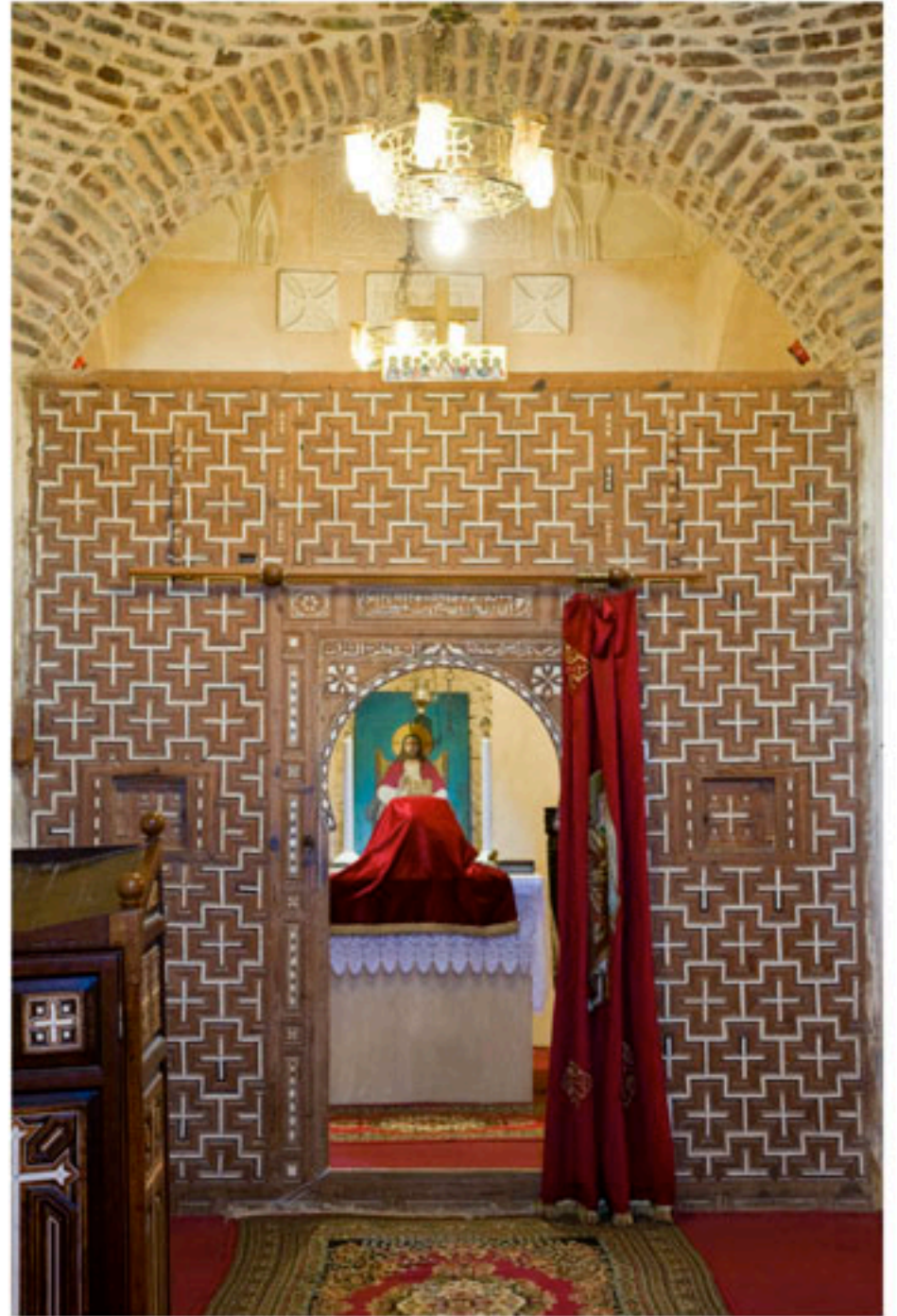


Left: chapel on 3rd floor of keep. Right: south altar on third floor of keep. (Area A).



Looking northward from south altar on third floor of the keep (Area A). 17





Left: north altar screen in chapel on 4th floor of keep 19
Right: north altar and altar screen in chapel on 4th floor of keep. (Area A).





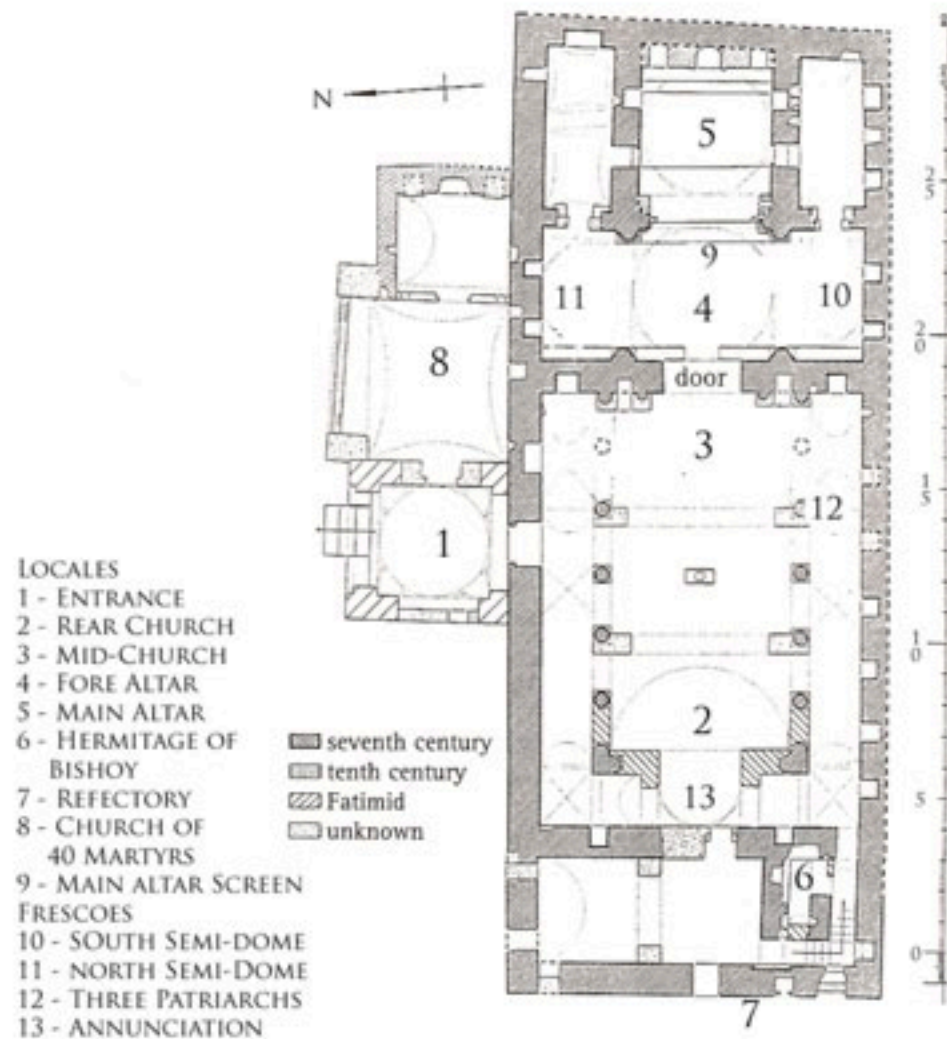
Left: altar screen for south altar in chapel on 4th floor of keep.
Right: looking northward from south altar in chapel on 4th floor of keep. (Area A).





Information building and library door (on left) of El-Sourian Monastery (Area G). 23





Floor plan of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B, page 4). Please use this for the identification of photos on the following pages.





The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary, rear of church (Area B2). 27





Fresco of the Annunciation Amidst Four Prophets. From left to right: Moses, Isaiah, the Virgin Mary, Archangel Gabriel, Ezekiel, and Daniel, in the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B13).



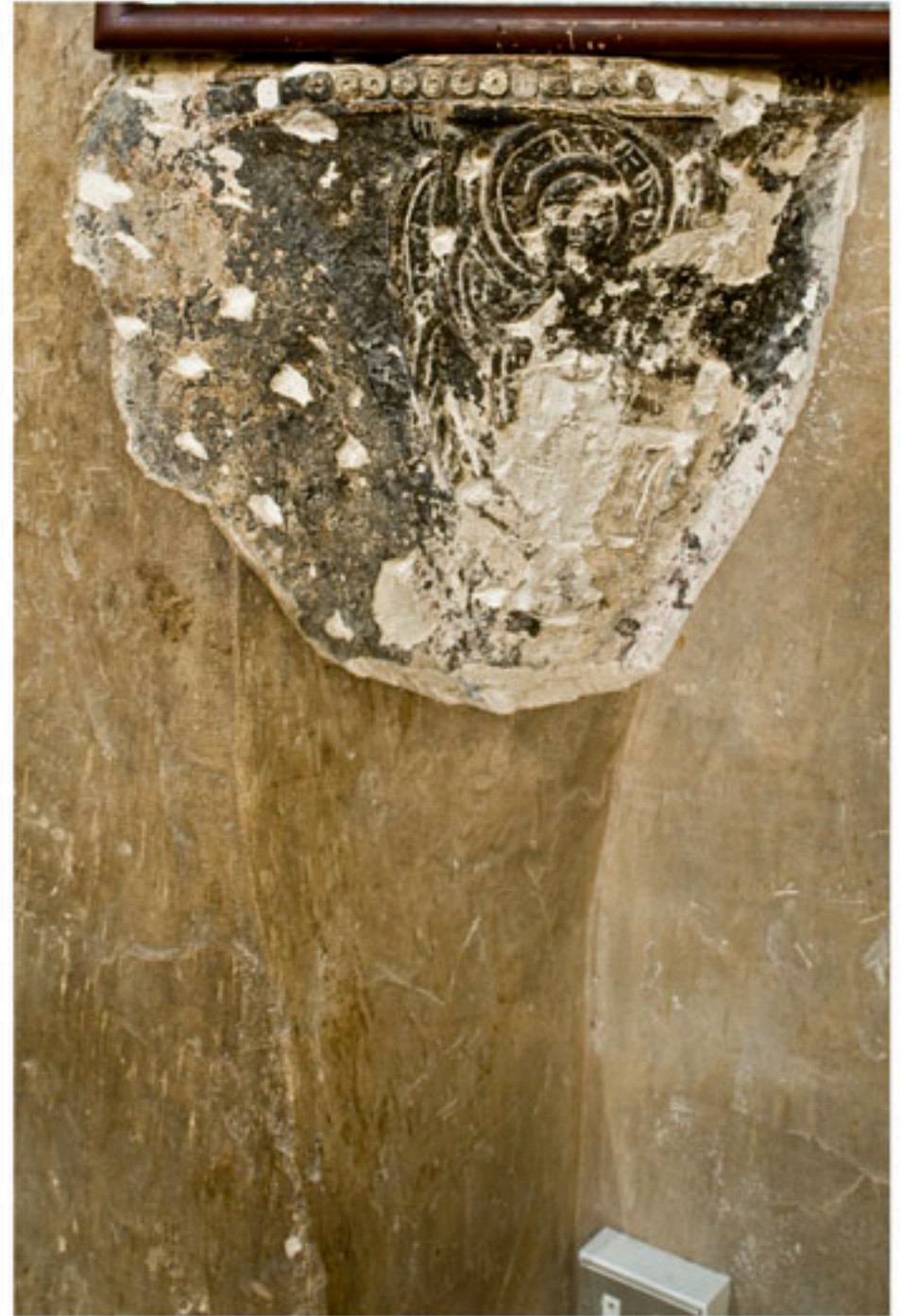


View of center altar from rear of church, the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B5).









Left: icon. Right: carving, the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary. (Area B3). 35





Fore altar, south wall, reliquary with frescoes above, detail. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B10). 37



Fore altar, south wall, St. Mercurius killing Julian the Apostate.
The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B10).



Fore altar, south wall, Holy Doctor St. Kolta.
The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B10).

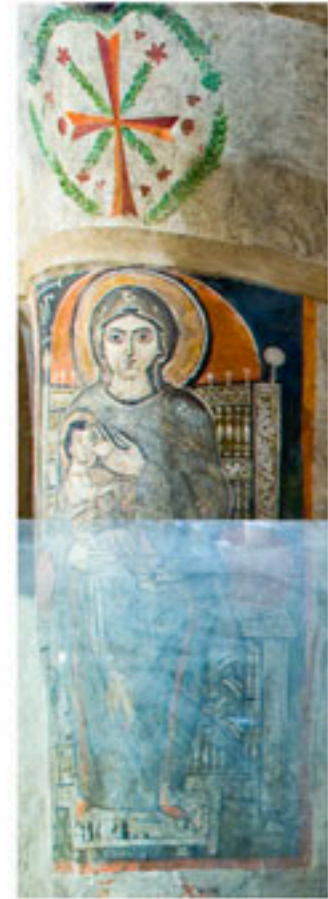




Left Side of Fresco: the Annunciation. Right Side of Fresco: Nativity of Christ. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B10). 41



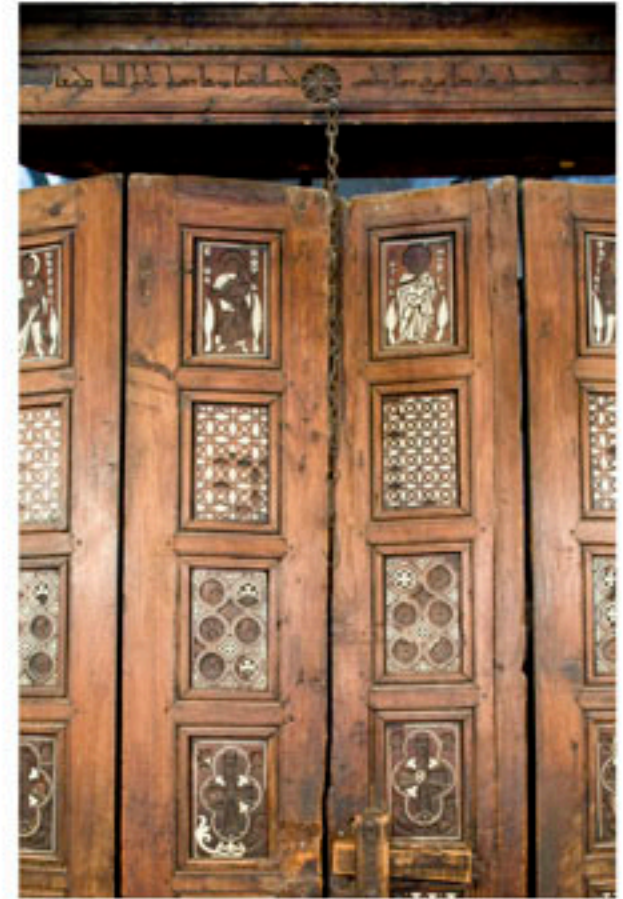




Left: fresco of Two Saints on Horseback.
Right: fresco on pillar, the Virgin Breastfeeding Christ. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B10).



St. Bacchus, soldier, guardian of the Sanctuary, fresco on left side of pillar.
The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B9).



Altar Screen with detail, known as the Door of Symbols. Each of the six leaves of the door has seven panels of ebony inlaid with ivory. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B9).



Left: St. Sergius, soldier, fresco on pillar, guardian of the Sanctuary (Area B9).
Right: fresco of St. James Minor and another saint adoring the Cross, above doorway (Area B11). The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary.





Fresco detail, northern wall of fore altar. From lower left, St. Pistentios and St. Apakir; Patriarch Demianous; St. Luke and St. Barnabas. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B11).





Fresco of St. Luke and St. Barnabas, northern wall of fore altar.
The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B11).





Abba Apollo, fresco on pillar, western wall of fore altar.
The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B4).





South wall of dome on southern wall of fore altar. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B10). 55





Left: north wall of dome on northern wall of fore altar. Frescos represent the Dormition of the Virgin. Right: west wall of dome on northern wall of fore altar. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B11).





Previous Page and This Page: center altar. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B5).



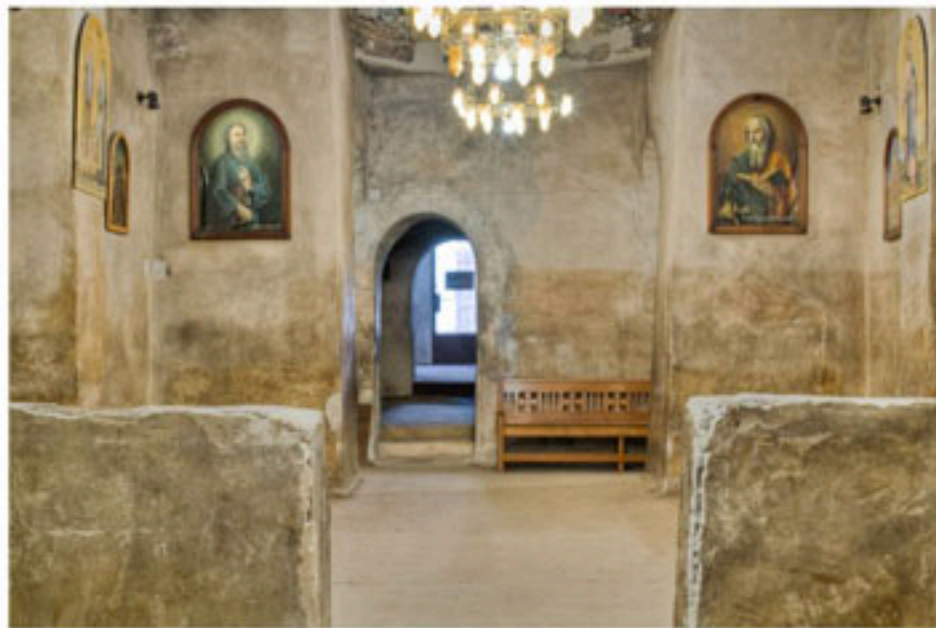


Left: south altar of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary. Right: north altar of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary.

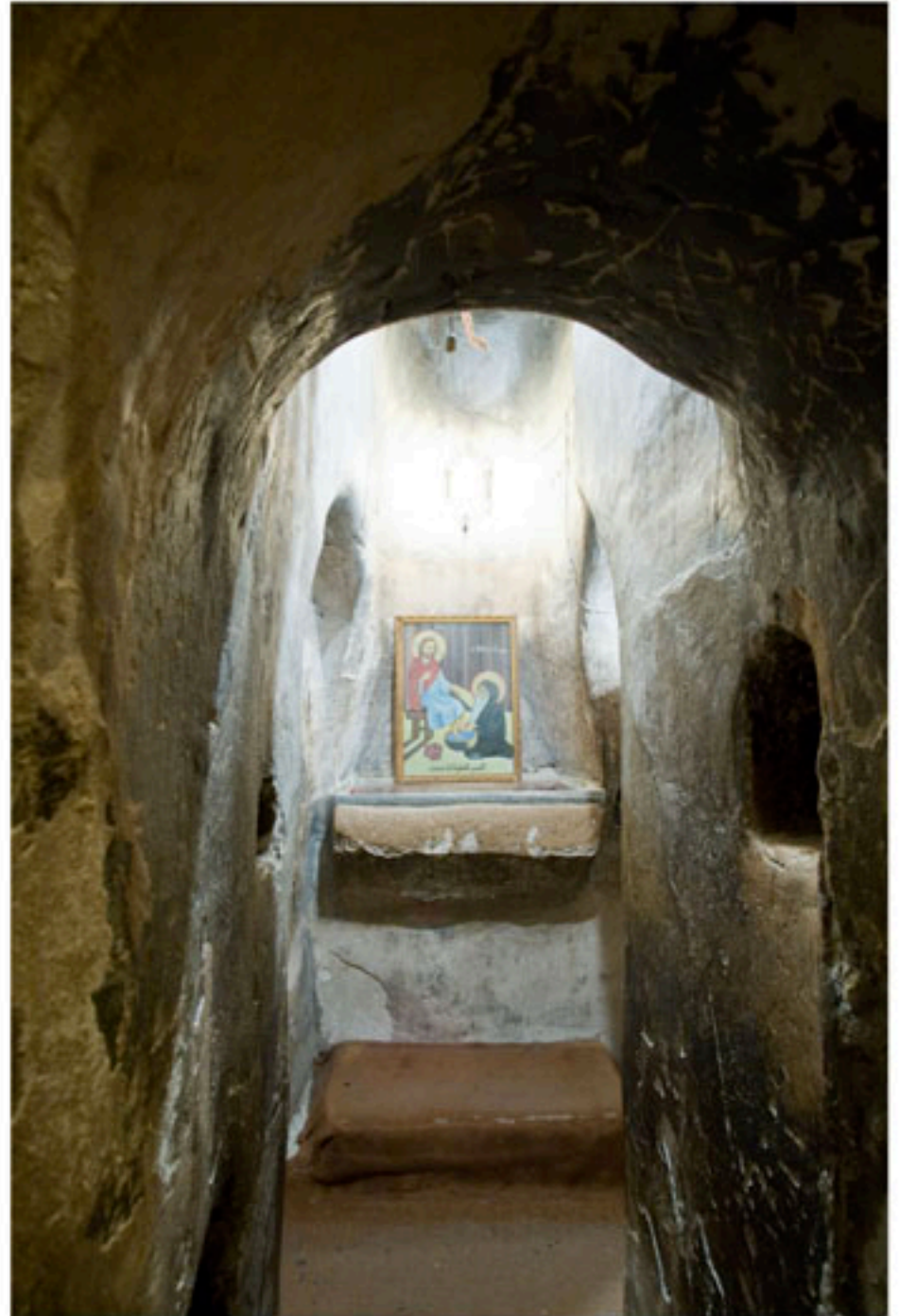




View to the rear of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B2). 63



Left: foot basin. Right: view to the rear of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B2).



Left: entrance to St. Bishoy's Hermitage. Right: St. Bishoy's Cave. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary. (Area B6). 65



Left: Refectory (Area B7). Right: door to the Church of the 40 Martyrs (Area B8). The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary.



Altar screen and altar of the Church of the 40 Martyrs. The Church of the Holy Virgin Mary (Area B8).





Bell tower and exterior domes of the Church of the Holy Virgin Mary.



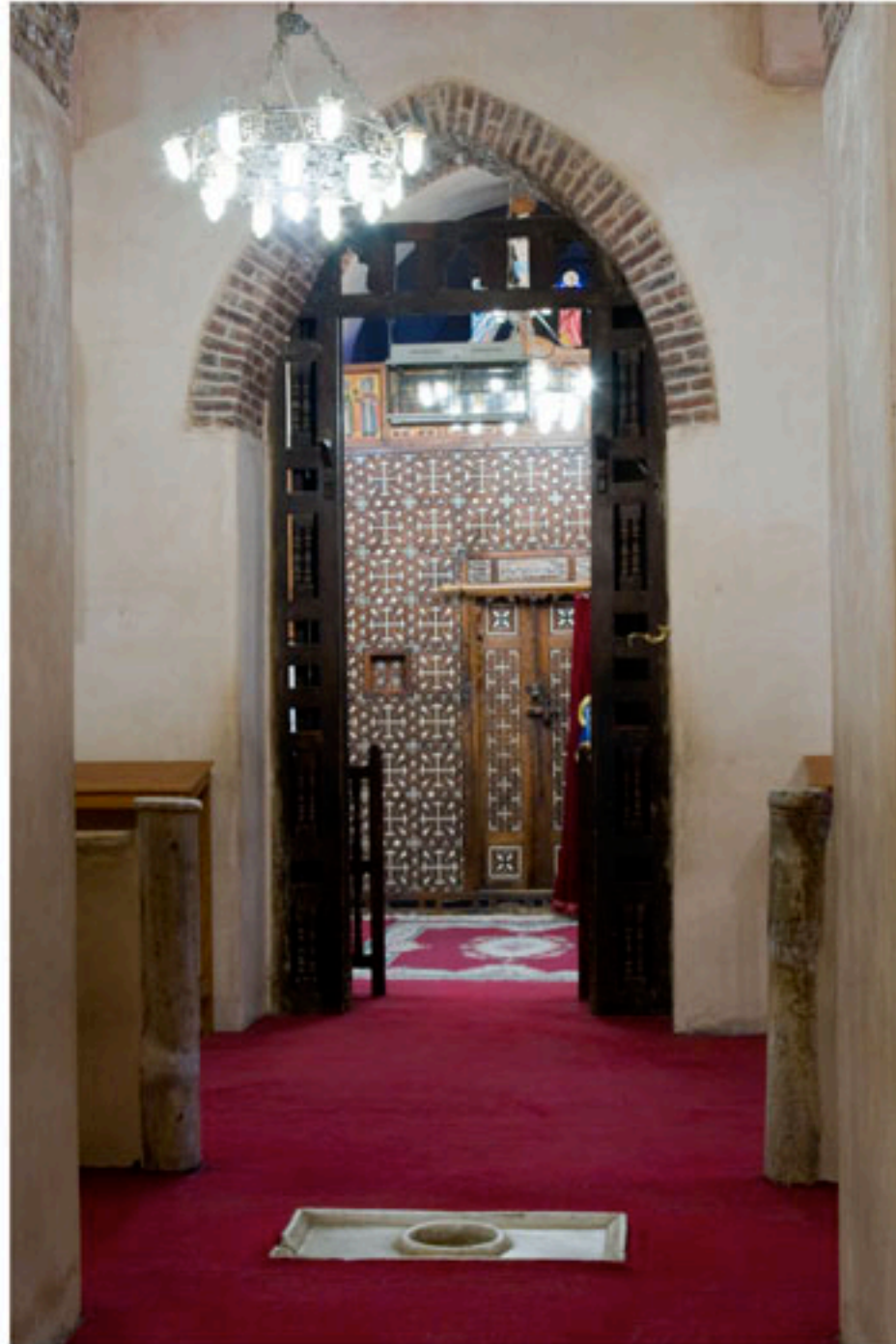






Entrance to the Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D). 73





Looking toward center altar from rear of church.
The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D).





Fore altar, looking north.
The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D).



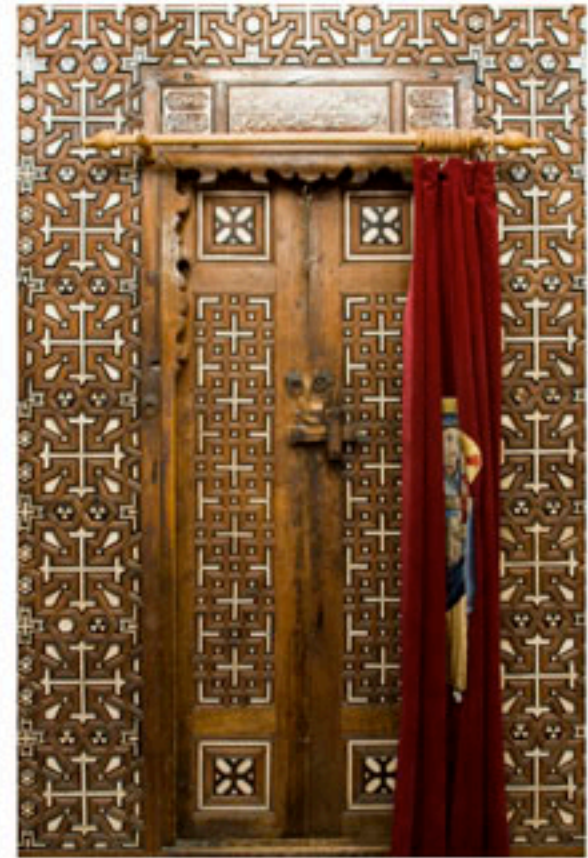






North altar screen and altar. 81
The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D).





Center altar screen and screen with detail.
The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D).





South altar screen and screen with detail.
The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D).





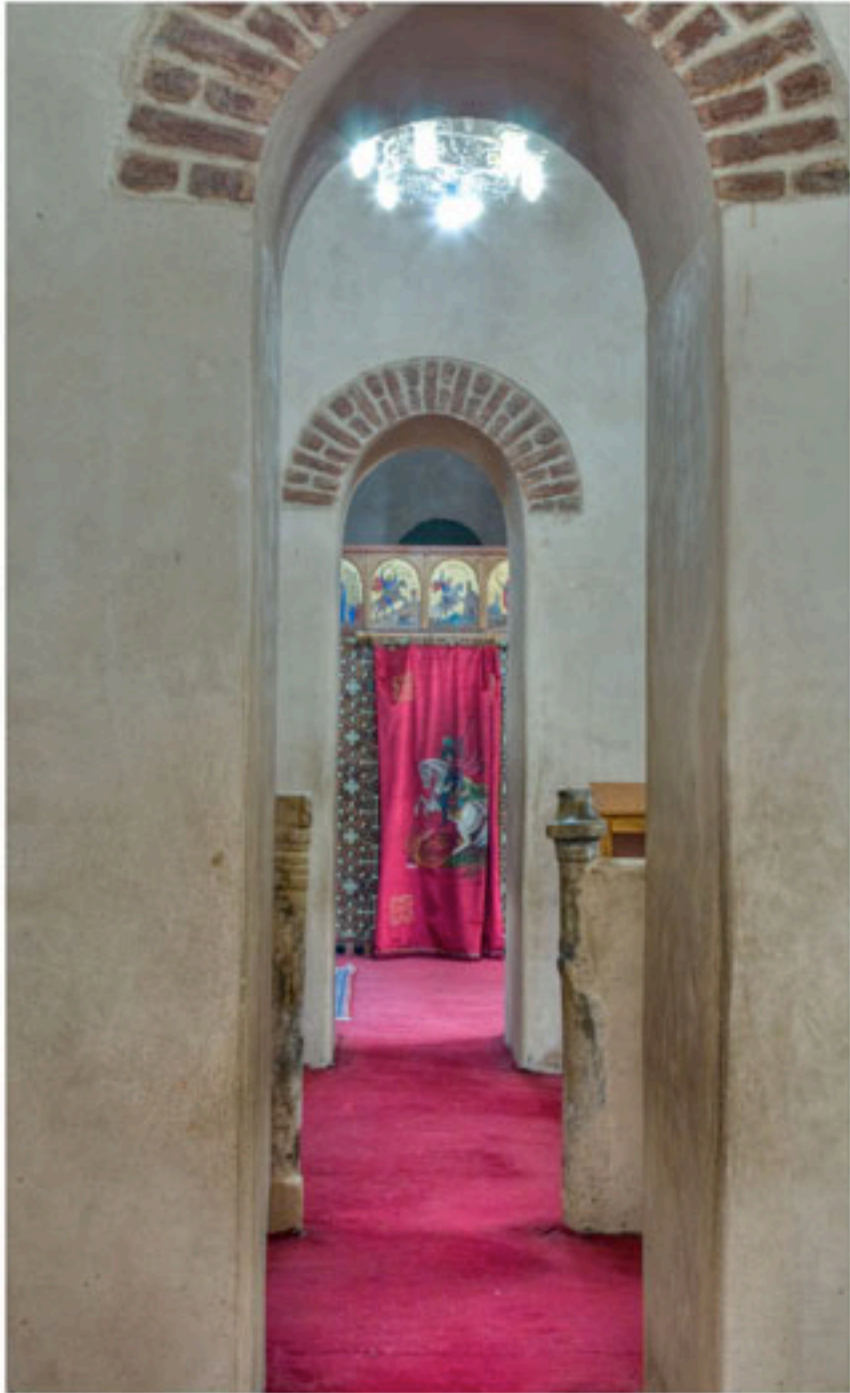
Left: view to rear of church from center altar. Right: view across mid-church looking northward. The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D).



Left: view across mid-church looking northward.
Right: reliquary, north wall. The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D).



Rear church, looking south. The Church of St. Mary (the Cave) (Area D). 89





Monastery courtyard from top of keep, looking east. 91







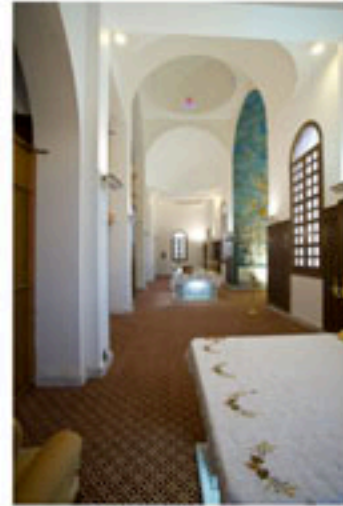
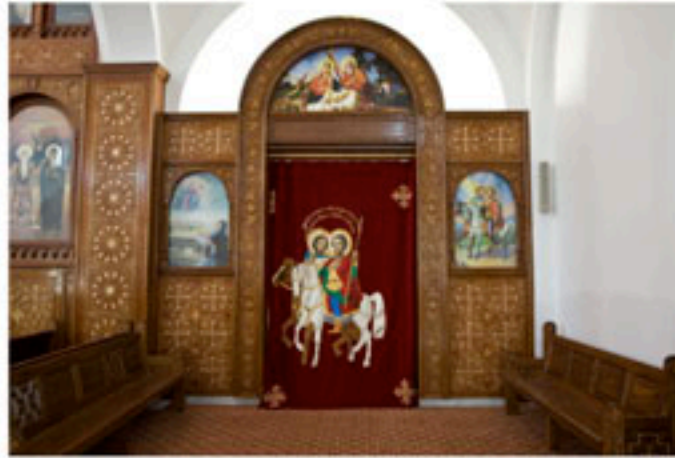






Center altar screen of Cathedral from mid-church (see map page 3). 97





Above Left: south altar screen of Cathedral. Above Right: view toward north from south altar of Cathedral. Below: Cathedral exterior (see map page 3).





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