



Saint Bishoy Monastery

Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt 2008

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Saint Bishoy Monastery

Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt

The Monastery of Saint Bishoy is one of the most ancient monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun. 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.

The Monastery of Saint Bishoy bears the name of its patron, one of the monastic fathers of the fourth century. The word "Bishoy" is from the Coptic and means "lofty". In 340 A. D. Saint Bishoy went to Wadi al-Natrun to live in the desert. He made his home on the site of the present monastery and became a spiritual father to the monks who gathered around him. When the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun were sacked by the Berbers in 407, Saint Bishoy took refuge in Antinopolis, where he later died. His body was returned to the monastery in the eleventh century and is now in the church that bears his name.

In the fifth century the Emperor Zenon built a fortress in the monastery to protect the monks from the attacks by the Berbers. During one of these attacks the Berbers killed 49 monks at the Monastery of Saint Macarius, and washed their swords in a well at the Monastery of Saint Bishoy. This well is now called the "well of the martyrs". The monastery's gateway has an inner gatehouse and tower, and is the most complete and best preserved gateway in Wadi al-Natrun. The monastery is the second residence of 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 39 should be used to provide an understanding of where the photos were taken in relation to the monastery as a whole.

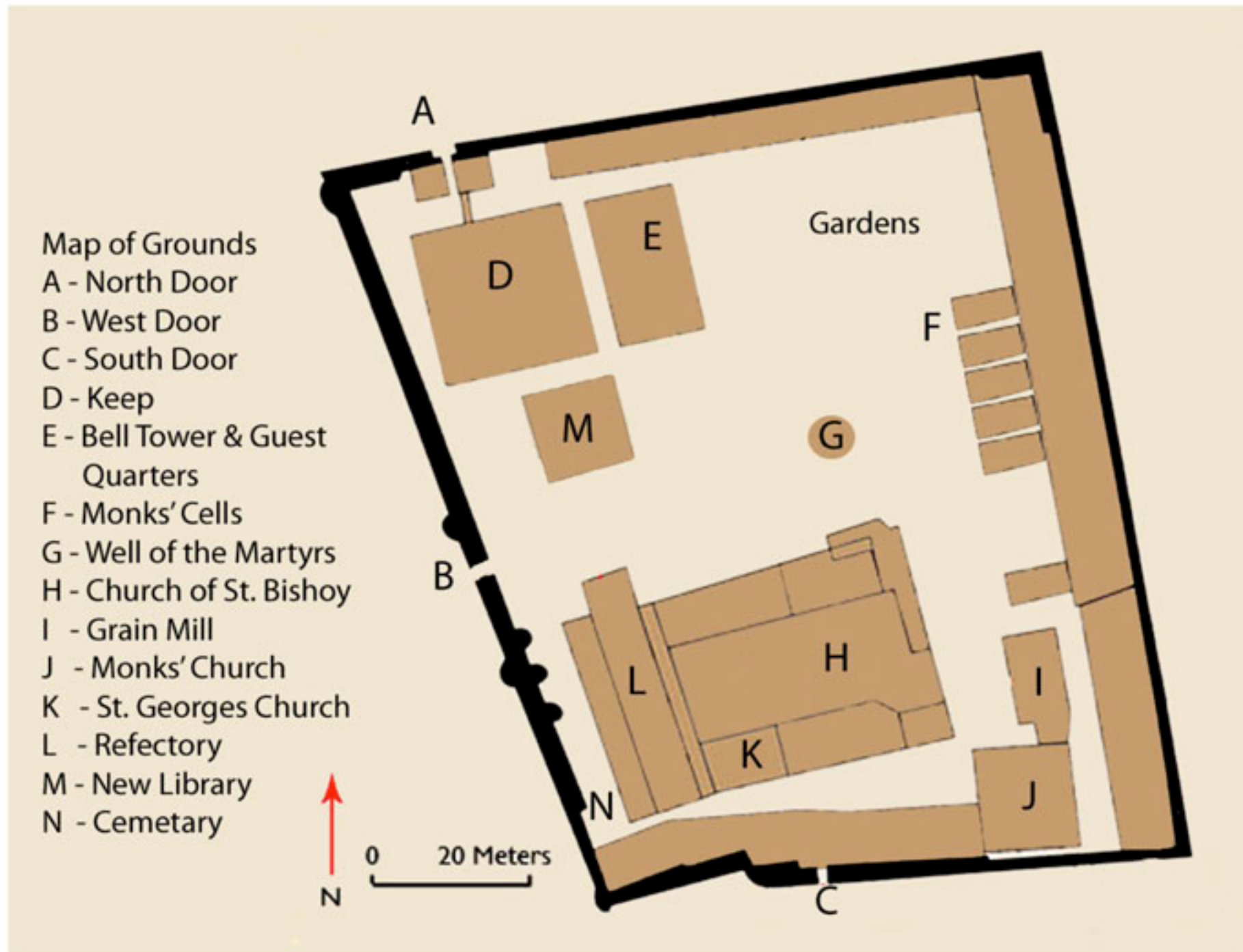
Page three provides an aerial view of the overall monastery complex, showing the details of the area within its walls as well as the area immediately surrounding the walls. This view corresponds with page 4, which is a map of the grounds within the monastery walls with its major buildings and features 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 39 is a floor plan of the main church, the Church of Saint Bishoy, with major features of the church labelled. The Church of Saint Bishoy floor plan uses a combination of the letter H (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 (H1).



Aerial map of the grounds of the Monastery of Saint Bishoy 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.





Saint Bishoy Monastery. North wall at sunrise (Area A).





Left: south wall (Area C). Right: east wall.





North door in north wall from the monastery interior (Area A).





Door Keeper's cell with bell (Area A).





View of the keep (fortress) from monastery entrance (Area D).





Left: storeroom on first floor of keep. Right: well on ground floor of keep. (Area D).





Entrance to the Church of the Virgin Mary on the second floor of the keep (Area D). 17













The north altar of the Church of the Virgin Mary on the second floor of the keep (Area D).





Arch detail in the Church of the Virgin Mary
on the second floor of the keep (Area D).



Above Left: arch detail in the Church of the Virgin Mary on the second floor of the keep.
Above Right: entrance to the Church of St. Michael on the third floor of the keep.
Next Page: Church of St. Michael on the third floor of the keep. (Area D).







Left: detail of altar screen, Church of St. Michael on the third floor of the keep.
 Right: altar screen, Church of St. Michael on the third floor of the keep. (Area D).





Bell tower (Area E).





View of monastery from bell tower with water tower in foreground (Area E). 33









This Page: Well of the Martyrs (Area G).
Next Page: Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H).









South wall of the Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H).





East wall of the Church of Saint Bishoy at sunrise (Area H). 43





Pulpit in nave of the Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H2).









Paintings in the fore altar of the Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H3).





Preceding Page: fore altar with paintings and focus on center altar. This Page Left: center altar screen. Above Right: center altar. Church of Saint Bishoy. (Area H2). Below Right: dome above center altar. Church of Saint Bishoy. (Area H4).





Left: south altar screen. Right: south altar, Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H5). 53





Reliquary of Saint Bishoy. Church of Saint Bishoy. (Area H3).





Left: center aisle of nave looking to rear of church.
 Right: nave of church across from entrance. Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H2).





Left: Door showing marble lintel. Right: altar screen, Church of Saint Iskhiron, Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H6).



Left: altar screen, Church of Saint Iskhiron. Right: altar, Church of Saint Iskhiron. Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H6).



Reliquary of Saint Iskhiron, Church of Saint Iskhiron.
Church of Saint Bishoy (Area H6).



Left: altar screen, Church of Saint Benjamin. Church of Saint Bishop.
 Right: Altar with wall paintings depicting three of the twenty-four Elders of the Apocalypse and the Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace. Church of Saint Benjamin. Church of Saint Bishop. (Area H7).



Left: Door to the grain mill.
Right: grain mill. (Area I).







Left: view of monks' cells along south wall of monastery, looking eastward.
Right: door to monk's cell along south wall.



Left: view of monks' cells along south wall looking westward.
Right: grain mill and the Monks' Church. (Areas I and J).









Left: altar screen for north altar of the Monks' Church (Area J). 71
 Right: north altar of the Monks' Church (Area J).



Upper Left and Right: south altar of the Monks' Church.
Lower: altar screen of south altar of the Monks' Church. (Area J).



Left: entrance to the Church of Saint George.
Right: interior of the Church of Saint George. (Area K).









Fresco from the Church of Saint George, north wall (Area K).



Paintings from the Church of Saint George, west wall (Area K).



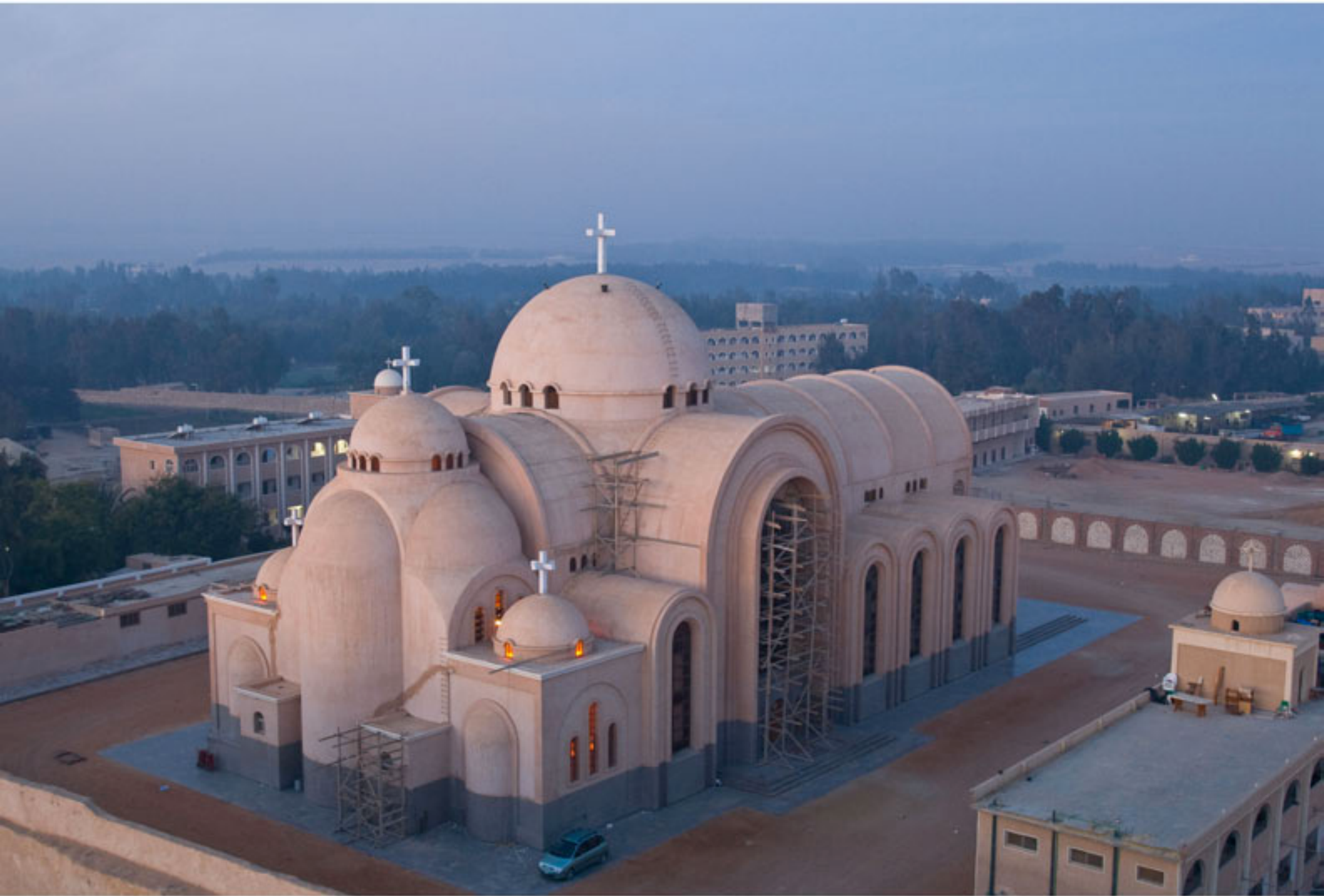
Columns in the Church of Saint George (Area K).

















Baptistry exterior.
See Aerial Map on page 3 for location.





Left: interior of Baptistery.
Above: Baptistery exterior. See Aerial Map on page 3 for location.





Left: visitor's library. See Aerial Map on page 3 for location.
Right: dormitories.



Various buildings on the grounds of Saint Bishoy Monastery.



Various buildings and gateway on the grounds of Saint Bishoy Monastery.





Various buildings on the grounds of Saint Bishoy Monastery.







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Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt 2008