

Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit

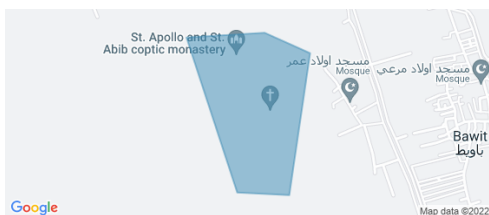
Secondary source

Entered by Alexandra Konstantinidou, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society

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The monastic settlement of Apa Apollo in Bawit is situated in middle-Egypt, between the modern cities of al-Minya and Assiut. It lies on the edge of the Nile Valley, on a naturally formed hill (kom). It is a typical 'monastic village', with hermitages built close to each other. According to the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, it was founded by Abba Apollo around 386-388 AD, but no archaeological evidence of such an early date is traced so far. According to inscriptions, the monastery existed until the tenth century, while the site was abandoned in the late eleventh or beginning of the twelfth century. Walter Ewing Crum and Jean Clédat were the first to identify the site as the monastery of Apa Apollo in the early 20th century. Archaeological investigations were first carried out by a French expedition (IFAO) between 1901/1902 and 1913. The site was then researched again in 1976-1985 by the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation. Fieldwork was resumed in 2003 (by IFAO and the Louvre) and continues until nowadays. The excavations have brought to light three churches. The 'southern' church was probably built in the seventh century AD. It was excavated in the early twentieth century and after the end of the investigations, it was destroyed by the removal of the architectural sculpture and a selection of wall paintings. The removed finds are nowadays kept in the Coptic Museum in Cairo and in the Louvre Museum. The church of Archangel Michael (also known as 'northern' church) is a three-aisled building with a sanctuary at the east, measuring 20.10 x 12.20 m. The walls are made of fired-brick and mud-brick and the floor is of limestone slabs. A wooden screen divides the sanctuary into two parts. The presence of a khurus in the western part is an indication that the church was built after the middle of the seventh century or the beginning of the eighth century. Wall-paintings decorated the walls, the columns and the pillars at the interior of the church. The main church of the complex is a three-aisled basilica with a tripartite sanctuary at the east, measuring 21.2 x 39.6 m (max. dim). Its walls are made of fired bricks with an external facing of limestone blocks. The building underwent various modifications (e.g. reconstruction of south wall with reused blocks, addition of a khurus in the seventh century). The main church was constructed in the late 6th-early seventh century AD. The interior of the entire building was decorated with wall-paintings. Furthermore, the carved architectural decoration in wood and stone would have been quite elaborate, as indicated by the large number of sculpted architectural remains, which are unearched. In addition to the churches, many buildings were discovered. Some of them were rather impressive, with several barrel-vaulted storeys, and walls decorated with wall-paintings, inscriptions, dipinti, and so on. They were initially identified as chapels, but it is now known that they must have been monastic dwellings. Among them, the so-called 'Building 1' is fully excavated. It consists of several rooms surrounding a courtyard. Access to the building was given from the south-western room. The walls of a vaulted room, east of the courtyard was richly decorated with wall-paintings. The geophysical survey carried out by T. Herbich showed that the site was densely inhabited, especially in the northern part of the hill. However, it is difficult to know how many of the hermitages were occupied simultaneously. A survey that was conducted in 2005-2006 (IFAO) on the top of the rocky plateau that rises to the west of the hill revealed clusters of hermitages, probably dating to the seventh/ eighth century AD. (Wipszycka 2018, 322-328) Numerous papyri and ostraca written mainly in Coptic, but in Greek as well, provide significant information about the monastic community living in Bawit. They were discovered either during the excavations, or in museum collections. The publications about the site are profuse (only a selection is included below).



Date Range: 390 CE - 900 CE

Region: Kom Bawit

Region tags: Egypt, Bawit

Bawit, Monastery of Apa Apollo

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

General Variables

Sources and Excavations

Print Sources

Print sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Clédat, J. Recherches sur le kom de Baouit, Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belle lettres. Paris 1902, 525-546.
- Source 2: Clédat, J. Le Monastère et la nécropole de Baouit, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie orientale 12 et 39, Le Caire, Vol. 1, 1904-1906 et Vol. 2, 1916. Le Monastère et la nécropole de Baouit, D. Bénazet, M.-H. Rutschowskaya et al. (eds.), Le Caire 1999
- Source 3: Hadji-Minaglou, G. Baouit 2019. Bulletin Archéologique des Ecoles françaises à l'étranger 2021, 1-15.

Online Sources

Online sources used for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: <https://www.ifao.egnet.net/archeologie/baouit/>
- Source 2 URL: <https://petitegalerie.louvre.fr/article/le-site-de-baouit>
- Source 3 URL: <https://www.trismegistos.org/place/10454>

Has this place been the focus of excavation (pre-modern, illicit, or scientific):

Answer 'Yes' for each period or type of excavation.

— Yes



Type of excavation:

— Scientific



Years of excavation:

— Year range: 1900-1914, 1976, 1984-1985, 2002-2022

Notes: The research is ongoing.



Name of excavation

– Official or descriptive name: Fouilles du monastère de Baouît – Moyenne Égypte

Topographical Context

Is the place associated with a feature in the landscape

– Other [specify]: No

Does the place involve human-made features besides structure:

Other features might be ground clearing, terracing, other modifications of the local environment.

– Yes



Type of feature

– Other [specify]: Digging holes by 'sebakhins'.

Is the place situated in an urban or significantly urbanized area:

– No

Is the place situated in a rural setting:

– Yes



Are there settlements in close proximity to the place:

– Yes

Notes: Small city of Dashlut and Bawit village.



Are there routes of travel in close proximity to the place:

– Yes

Is the place situated far removed from non-religious places of habitation:

– No

Structures Present

Are there structures or features present:

Instructions: Answer once for each structure/feature or group that can be differentiated.

– Yes



↳ A single structure

– Yes

↳ The structure has a definite shape

– Rectangular

↳ One single feature

– Other [specify]: No single feature but a group of features composing structures.

↳ A group of structures:

– Yes

↳ Are they part of a single design/construction stage:

– No

Notes: Probably constructed at consecutive or different phases.

↳ A group of features:

– Yes

↳ Are they part of a single design/construction stage:

– Yes

Notes: Yes and no. The site evolved in a period of five centuries. There are also features that do not belong to the same construction stage.

↳ Is it part of a larger place/sanctuary:

– No

↳ What is the function of the structure/feature or group:

Answer "Yes" once for each distinct function

– Worship

↳ Worship:

– Communal

↳ Is the structure/feature finished:

– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature intended to last beyond a generation:
– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature modified through time:
– Yes

↳ Was the structure/feature destroyed:
– No

Notes: Certain monuments were abandoned and then the site was disturbed by the constant digging of the 'sebakhins'.

↳ Has the structure/feature been reconstructed:
– No

Notes: Mild restoration is carried out during excavation to prevent further damage.

Reasons for Creation/Construction/Consecration

Is the place used for the worship of/communication with non-human supernatural beings:
– Yes

↳ Dedicated to a supernatural being:
– Yes [specify]: God

Notes: Apa Apollo

↳ Dedicated to more than one supernatural being:
– No

Is the place used for the worship of a semi-divine human being:
– No

Is the place used for the worship of non-divine ancestors:
– No

Was the place commissioned/built by an official political entity:
A political entity is a local power structure that leverages a workforce.
– No

Were the Structures built by specific groups of people:

– I don't know

Was the place thought to have originated as the result of divine intervention:

– No

Notes: There is no respective information.

Was the place created to mark or commemorate the birthplace of a supernatural or human being:

– No

Was the place created as the result of an event:

– No

Was the creation of the place sponsored by an external financial/material donation:

– No

Notes: There is no respective information.

Was the establishment of the place motivated by:

– Expression of devotion with no expectation of favor in return

Was the place built specifically for housing scriptures/sacred texts:

– No

Design and Material Remains

Overall Structure

Is the place made up of multiple built structures:

– Yes



Are any of the structures attached to or associated with a landscape feature:

– No



Are any of the structures attached to other structures:

– Yes



↳ Is there a hierarchy among the structures:

– Yes

Is monumental architecture present:

Monumental architecture is defined here as a built structure that surpasses average human proportions and in general is larger and more complex than is necessary to fulfill the structure's utilitarian function(s). Examples of monumental architecture include Mesopotamian Ziggurats, Egyptian Pyramids, Greek and Roman temples, Mesoamerican Pyramids, North American and Aegean burial mounds, etc.

– Yes

↳ In the average place, what percentage of area is taken up by built monuments:

– Percentage: 85

Notes: Approximate assumption based on geoarchaeological investigation that shows the extent of the built environment, most of which is not excavated.

↳ Footprint of largest single religious monument, square meters:

Please add dimensions in the comments, if known.

– Square meters: 84

Notes: Area of the main church, which is a three-aisled basilica.

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Height, meters: 5.5

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– I don't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– I don't know

Is the structure/feature made out of natural materials:

Answer [Yes] for each material type

– Yes

↳ Earth

– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– I don't know

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:
– I don't know

↳ Sand
– No

↳ Clay
– No

↳ Plaster
– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:
– I don't know

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:
– Yes

↳ Wood
– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:
– I don't know

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:
– Yes

↳ Grass
– No

↳ Stone
– Yes

↳ Is this material sourced locally:

– I don't know

↳ Is this material lacking in the local natural environment:

– I don't know

↳ Other

–Other [specify]: No

Is the structure/feature made out of human-made materials

– No

Decoration

Is decoration present:

– Yes

↳ Is decoration part of the building (permanent):

– Yes

↳ On the outside:

– No

↳ On the inside:

– Yes

↳ Is decoration attached to the building, i.e. movable reliefs or tapestries

– Yes

Notes: Woodwork.

↳ Is the decoration figural:

A figural representation is defined here as one that contains the depiction of discernible human, anthropomorphic, animal, or zoomorphic forms. In general, it differentiates between animate and inanimate beings, as well as between narrative compositions and still life, landscapes, abstraction, etc. Answer [Yes] for each type of figure depicted

– Yes

↳ Are there gods depicted:

– No

↳ Are there other supernatural beings depicted:

– Yes

Notes: Virgin Mary, Christ, the Apostles, Angels, Saints, cherubs, etc.

↳ Are there humans depicted:

– No

Notes: Holy personages.

↳ Are there animals depicted:

– Yes

↳ Are there animal-human hybrids depicted:

– No

↳ Is the decoration non-figural:

– Yes

↳ Is it geometric/abstract

– Yes

↳ Floral motifs

– Yes

↳ Is it writing/caligraphy

– Yes

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: No.

↳ Is the decoration hidden or restricted from view:

– No

↳ Are there statues present:

– No

↳ Are there reliefs present:

A relief as opposed to sculpture carved on the round is a work of sculpture in which the figures project from a background support, generally a flat surface. Reliefs can be carved out of stone, clay, or a similar material.

– Yes

↳ Reliefs representing the god(s) worshipped at the place:

– No

↳ Reliefs representing mythological narratives:

– No

↳ Reliefs representing human/historical narratives:

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: Geometric and floral motifs, Christian iconography.

↳ Are there paintings present:

– Yes

↳ Are they panel paintings [movable]:

– No

↳ Are they wall paintings:

– Yes

↳ Type

–Other [specify]: Encaustic.

↳ Paintings representing the gods worshipped at the place:

– No

↳ Paintings representing mythological narratives:

– No

↳ Paintings representing human/historical narratives:

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: Christian iconography.

↳ Are there mosaics present:

– No

↳ Are there inscriptions as part of the decoration:

– Yes

↳ Are the inscriptions ornamental:

– No

↳ Are the inscriptions informative/declarative
[e.g. historical narratives, calendars, donor lists etc...]

– Yes

↳ Are the inscription a formal dedication:

– Yes

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: No.

↳ Other type of decoration:

–Yes [specify]: Woodwork.

Iconography

Are there distinct features in the places iconography:

– Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not)

– Yes

Notes: Not individually but as elements of the faces of depicted figures.

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic)

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic)

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract)

– No

↳ Portrayals of afterlife

– Yes

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols)

– Yes

↳ Humans

– No

↳ Supernatural narratives

– Yes

↳ Human narratives

– No

↳ Other [Specify]

–Other [specify]: No

Beliefs and Practices

Funerary Associations

Is this place a tomb/burial:

– No

Notes: It is a monastery. A cemetery is discovered.

Is this a place for the worship of the dead:

– No

Is this a place for treatment of the corpse:

– No

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

Co-sacrifices are animal/human sacrifices prompted by the death of the primary occupant of the tomb/burial.

– No

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

↳ Personal effects:

– No

↳ Valuable/precious items:

– No

↳ Other

– Yes [specify]: Painted jugs, red slip dishes, cooking-pots, amphorae and lamps - maybe implying that there were rituals taking place.

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

↳ Family tomb/crypt:

– No

↳ Domestic context:

Interred beneath floors of house, or in areas of domestic activity

– No

↳ Other

–Other [specify]: No

Supernatural Beings

Is a supreme high god is present:

– Yes

↳ Are they anthropomorphic:

– Yes

↳ Are they sky deity:

– Yes

↳ Are they chthonic (underworld)

– No

↳ Are they fused with king/kingship role (king = high god)

– No

↳ Are they the monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

↳ Are they kin relation to elites:

– No

↳ Are they other type of loyalty or connection to elites:

– No

↳ Are they unquestionably good:

– Yes

↳ Are they other:

—Other [specify]: No

Does the supreme high god communicate with the living at this place:

— No

Are previously human spirits present:

— No

Do human spirits communicate with the living at this place:

— No

Are nonhuman supernatural beings present:

— No

Do nonhuman spirits communicate with the living at this place:

— No

Are mixed human-divine beings present:

— No

Do mixed human-divine beings communicate with the living at this place:

— No

Is the supernatural being/high god present in the form of a cult statue(s):

— No

Supernatural Interactions

Is supernatural monitoring present:

— No

Do visitors communicate with the gods or supernatural beings:

— No

Ritual and Performance

Sacrifices, Offerings, and Maintenance

Are sacrifices performed at this place:

— No

Are there self-sacrifices present:

— No

Are material offerings present:

— I don't know

Is attendance to worship/sacrifice mandatory:

— No

Is maintenance of the place performed:

— Yes



Is it required:

— I don't know



Is there cleansing (for the maintenance):

— Yes



Are there periodic repairs/reconstructions:

— Yes



Is the maintenance performed by permanent staff:

— I don't know



Other

— Other [specify]: No

Pilgrimage and Festivals

Are pilgrimages present:

— Yes



- ↳ How strict is pilgrimage:
 - optional (rare)
- ↳ Are pilgrimages the main reason for construction/establishment of the place:
 - No
- ↳ Are pilgrimages to this place associated with significant life events:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Does pilgrimage to this place involve following established routes (roads):
 - I don't know

Is this place a venue for feasting:

– No

Are festivals present:

– No

Divination and Healing

Is divination present:

– No

Is healing present/practiced at this place:

– No

Do rituals occur at this place:

Rituals are visibly enacted behaviors by one or more people for the purposes of religious observance.

– Yes

Notes: Holy Communion.

- ↳ Do large-scale rituals take place:
 - I don't know
- ↳ Do small-scale rituals take place:
 - I don't know

- ↳ On average how many participants are present in large-scale rituals:
 - specify: Unknown
- ↳ How often do these rituals take place:
 - specify: Allegedly once a week, but could have been more often.
- ↳ Are there orthodoxy checks:
 - Yes
 - Notes: Orthodoxy from the Egyptian perspective.
- ↳ Are there orthopraxy checks:
 - No
- ↳ Are there synchronic practices:
 - Yes
- ↳ Are there intoxicants used during the ritual:
 - No

Institutions and Scriptures

Religious Specialists

Are religious specialists present/in charge of this place:

Religious specialists are individuals whose primary duties within a population group are not concerned with subsistence or craft production but the maintenance of the religious landscape and culture of the group.

— Yes

- ↳ Present full time
 - Yes

- ↳ Present part time
 - No

- ↳ Are the religious specialists of specific sex/gender:
 - Yes

- ↳ Are the religious specialists of specific ethnicity:
 - Yes
- ↳ Are the religious specialists of specific class/cast:
 - No
- ↳ Are religious specialists dedicated to the place for life:
 - Yes
- ↳ Are the religious specialists stratified in a hierarchical system:
 - Yes
- ↳ Is access within the space segregated by this hierarchy:
 - I don't know

Does this place incorporate a living space for religious specialists:

– Yes

Is this place used for the training of religious specialists:

– Yes

Are there formal institutions for the maintenance of the place:

Institutions that are authorized by the religious community or political leaders

– Yes

Bureaucracy

Is there a formal bureaucracy present at this place:

A bureaucracy consists of a hierarchical system of accounting and rule maintenance primarily concerned with material wealth.

– Yes

- ↳ Is a bureaucracy present permanently:
 - Yes
- ↳ Is a bureaucracy present on a temporary or seasonal basis:
 - No

Does this place control economic resources (land, goods, tools):

– Yes

↳ Is this control the primary supporting income of this place:

– I don't know

↳ Does this place lease out land:

– Yes

↳ Does this place lease out tools:

– No

Public Works

Does this place serve as a location for services to the community:

– No

Writing/Scriptures

Is non-religious writing stored at this place:

Economic documents, records etc.

– Yes

Are there scriptures associated with this place:

– Yes

↳ Are they written:

– Yes

↳ Are they written at this place:

– Yes

↳ Are they oral:

– I don't know

Notes: It is probable that there was oral tradition regarding the place.

↳ Is there a story associated with the origin and/or construction of this place:

– Yes

↳ Are there religious specialists in charge of interpreting the scriptures:

– I don't know

↳ Are the scriptures part of the building/place:

– Yes

↳ Attached to the structures as decoration:

– Yes

↳ Housed within the place/structure:

– Yes

↳ As dedicatory inscription(s):

– Yes

↳ Other

–Other [specify]: No

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