

DAYR MAR MINA (Jabal Abu Fudah)

A monastery famous for its picturesque character. It hangs on a cliff on the south of the Jabal Abu Fudah opposite Manfalut. Its situation in caves high up and the method of approaching it by means of a chain and walks hollowed into the rock have led to several travelers' calling it Dayr al-Bakarah (monastery of the pulley). This creates some confusion with the Dayr al-Tayr near Minya, which is also called Dayr al-Bakarah.

The most ancient author who speaks of this monastery seems to be al-MAQRIZI (d. 1441). He calls it "monastery of the cave of Shaqalqil." This is the name of an island and of a village near it. He notes its situation and its mode of access. He also writes that it is dedicated to Saint [Menas](#) and indicates the day of his feast. Since there is no village nearby that could serve as a geographical landmark, al-Maqrizi gives it the name "the cave of Shaqalqil" because near the monastery there was a cave famous for the heaps of mummified fish of which he speaks elsewhere (some references on this subject will be found in Maspero and Wiet, 1919, p. 114).

This monastery is mentioned by some travelers. The first European who passed this way appears to have been J. Vansleb, who noted "the monastery of Saint [Menas](#) surnamed the thaumaturge at . . ." The placename is left blank by the author, who did not know al-Maqrizi's geographical landmark. C. Sicard spoke of it several times. He knew the lofty situation of the monastery and its unusual mode of entry. He called it now the monastery of Saint Menas, now that of Pithirion, no doubt the one of which the HISTORIA MONACHORUM IN [AEGYPTO](#) speaks. R. [Pococke](#) described it without giving it a name (1743-1745, p. 75). F. L. Norden called it "monastery of the pulley" (1795-1798, Vol. 2, p. 51), as did G. Wilkinson (1843, Vol. 2, p. 75). G. Legrain (1900, p. 5) and J. Maspero (1910, p. 19) also often call it "monastery of the pulley." S. Clarke described it in passing (1912, p. 178).

The monastery is a center of pilgrimage, much frequented especially on the day of the feast of Saint Menas, 18 Ba'unah (Muyser and Viaud, 1979, pp. 50-51).

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