

Mar Mina

Miracle Performer

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Abstract

Mar Mina is considered one of the most important Saints not only in Egypt, but also in the whole world. He carried many titles according to his miracles which the majority of his people were as witnesses on them. His church was rebuilt during the reign of Pope Kiroles VI, as he left a will mentioned his wish to be buried beside the great Saint. Moreover; another church that carries his name was built in Cairo, at Foum el Khalig. It is mentioned that the church of Foum El Khalig was built as the Christ appeared one day in a vision dream to one of the priests and ordered that the body of Saint Mina must be transferred from the monastery of Mariout at Alexandria and to be buried in the church at Foum el Khalig, so the mission was completed and the remains of his body was housed inside the church. This article aims to highlight the importance of Mar Mina, his autobiography, his faith in Christianity and how he defended it. It is also going to identify how his body was protected by God and how he gained this fame all around the world.

Key words: location- autobiography- The Persecution- his death- Recommendations

1. Introduction

St Mina Monastery

The monastery of Saint Mina is located approximately 50 km southwest of Alexandria, the whole village-town is given the name of Abu-Mina is after the owner of the monastery¹.

A modern monastery has been built on the location of an ancient church, where the Saint's remains are believed to be buried². A German archeological team has been working at Abu Mina since 1969. In 1942 English excavations took place to described the place according to the British archaeologist "Ward Perkins" as following:

¹<https://egypt.travel/en/attractions/st-Mina-monastery-> access in 9-February 2022.

² SH., SADEK, "Saint Mina Monastery in Arabic Sources", in Christianity and Monasticism in Northern Egypt, edited by Gawdat Gabra, Hany. N. Takla, AUC, 2017, p. 25.

(The place included the remains of a large church in the midst of a cemetery, a smaller chapel, a bath with a Basilical hall, wells and cisterns, pottery works, and a number of residences)

The Modern Monastery of Saint Mina

The modern monastery is built close to the ruins of [Abu Mina](#), the original pilgrimage site, which was destroyed at the mid-7th century³.

In 1979 UNESCO declared that Deir Mar Mina is one among the five important cultural sites in Egypt, and also considered to be one among the 57 areas all over the world that should be preserved as human heritage⁴.

It is mentioned that during the reign of El Mo3ez, the bones was transferred to Ashmoun Elroman to the house of El Sheikh Sinaii to take care of him, then he took the body with him to Banha el 3sl as he had a virgin daughter who decided to take care of the Saint`s body as the Saint`s trying to thank the girl by appearing to her in her dreams⁵.

Then they decided to transfer the body to the church according to the Christ wish as he appeared in a vision to Isacc the priest and expressed his desire to move the body and at last it was moved to Faum el Khalig⁶.

It seems that there was very close relation between Pope Kyrillos VI and St Mina, as Pope used to ask the great Saint for help and due to this intimate relationship, the Pope expressed his wish to be buried at the monastery of St Mina. The shrine of Pope Kyrillos VI at the monastery`s modern basilica is today a place for pilgrimage⁷.

In the occasion of the celebration of the festival of Mar Mina as the date was the 24th of November, Pope Shenouda III stated the following text as proved the close spiritual relationship between Pope Kirollis VI and Saint Mina as following⁸:

- *Today Saint Mina is happy because of the foundation of this great Cathedral in his monastery. Today, the spirit of Pope Kirillios VI also rejoices as he sets the foundation of this church. No doubt, he is happy now because of the accomplishment of the construction of the church. No doubt he is prays with you today and blesses you all*

The people were getting ready to face the Berbers, and the Governor decided to take the body of St. Mina with him to be his deliverer and his strong

³ SH., SADEK, *Ibid.*, p. 21-22.

⁴*The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr, The Miraculous Saint Mina*. Prepared and published by: Saint Mina Coptic Orthodox Monastery, Mariout, Egypt, 2005, p. 39.

⁵ SH., SADEK, "Saint Mina Monastery in Arabic Sources", in *Christianity and Monasticism in Northern Egypt*, edited by Gawdat Gabra, Hany. N. Takla, AUC, 2017, p. 29.

⁶*The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr, The Miraculous Saint Mina*. Prepared and published by: Saint Mina Coptic Orthodox Monastery, Mariout, Egypt, 2005, p. 32-34.

⁷ E. M. GABRIEL, *The History of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United States*, from the Land of the Pharaoh to the United States of America, 2021, chapter 14.

⁸ E. M. GABRIEL, *Ibid.*, chapter 14.

protector. He took the body secretly and through the blessings of this Saint, he overcame the Berbers and returned victorious.

Moreover; in 1948 –group of Coptic scholars decided to organize association responsible for giving sections specified in Coptic historical sites included also the excavations and publishing through annual bulletin that recorded their activity which is called "The Association of St. Mina in Alexandria"⁹.

St. Mina is one of the most popular Saints of the Coptic Church. However the site of the Monastery and the Cathedral built in king Mareotis still carried his name up till now.

One of the epithets attached to his name is that of "wonder - worker" even though the many miracles wrought in his name occurred after he died¹ .as a martyr¹ .

Mar Mina was one of the most renowned of the Egyptian Saints, he was born to Christian parents in the late third century¹ . He is considered to be one of the most important Saints in Egypt¹ , his father`s name is Aûdexios, who held an important position in the Roman Empire. His father was transferred to Africa because of his brother who was jealousy from his brother and he witnessed against him in front of the Emperor. When his father died Mina was almost 14 years old, so he joined the army, as he was given a very high position due to his father's value and fame¹ .

Minas spent 5 years as a monk serving his new believe and cult which is Christianity, he saw in an inspiration that the angels were crowning the martyrs, and while he was thinking in this issue he heard a voice saying:

"Blessed are you Minas because you have been called to the pious life from your childhood. You shall be granted three immortal crowns: one for your celibacy, another for your asceticism, and a third for your martyrdom."

⁹Iris HABIB EL MASRY, *ST Mina Called The Wonder Worker*, July, 2022,p. 29.

¹ Iris HABIB EL MASRY, *ST Mina Called The Wonder Worker*, July, 2022, p. 25.

¹ The word "martyr" comes originally from the ancient Greek legal term for "witness", for someone who gives testimony or evidence in a court of law. In the face of Roman persecutions of early Christians in the first three centuries of the Common Era, when Christian believers were put on trial for refusing to participate in state religious activities which were regarded as a civic duty incumbent upon all Roman citizens, the word took on an entirely new meaning.

¹ N. A. ZAKRY, "The Iconography² of Saint Minas in the Coptic Art", *Journal of the faculty of Tourism and Hotels- University of Sadat City*, Vol 1, p. 37 2017.

¹ According to Grossmann the name of the place of Saint Mina was "Nepaeiat al-Bayadi," meaning "Libya", at the 14thcentuey his body was transferred to Fumm al-Khalig or ZahraaMisral-Qadima (Mar Mina Monastery), also called the church of Bu Mina, in al-Hamra near the Roman fortress of Babylon.

¹ N. A. ZAKRY, "The Iconography⁴ of Saint Minas in the Coptic Art", *Journal of the faculty of Tourism and Hotels- University of Sadat City*, Vol 1, p. 37 2017.

Minas didn't wait and went to the ruler and declared his faith in Christianity¹ .” That was the voice heard by Mar Mina in his vision with the heavenly angels crowning him. According to the Arabic sources. St. Mina the Egyptian, or the Miracle Worker, is one of the most important Coptic Saints in Egypt from the Roman period.

He was sent to Algeria and after 3 years he came back again, as his case was defended on his believe which was Christianity, the emperor tried several time to persuade him to come back to their believe but in vain¹ then he was tortured¹ a lot during the Roman era because of the persecution of the Christians during the reign of Diocleation¹ .

His life was ended by killing him as they cut his head, his body was thrown in fire¹ and his ashes were dispersed² in the wind² .

One day a wooden box was found which contained bones wrapped in a piece of cloth, so the box was put into fire for one day and the surprise happened in the next morning after they saw a great light coming out of the box so the Pope Benjamin realized the identity of the bones, according to this he ordered the bones and cloth in the box which fire could not spoiled to be transferred to the church of St. Mina in Foum-El-Khalig .

His feast day is celebrated every year on 15 Hathor in the [Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria](#), which corresponds to [November 24](#) on the [Gregorian Calendar](#). In [Eastern Orthodox churches](#) that follow the old style or [Julian calendar](#), it is likewise celebrated on November 24. In the Eastern Orthodox churches that follow the new style or [Revised Julian calendar](#), as well as in the [Catholic Church](#), it is celebrated on November 11² .

¹ *Ibid.*; Bishop Youssef, Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, St. Mina: Blessed With the Gift of Healing , <https://suscopts.org/resources/literature/177/st-Mina-blessed-with-the-gift-of-healing/> access in 7-8-2021.

¹ Iris HABIB EL MASRY, *ST Mīna Called The Wonder Worker*, July, 2022,

¹ Iris HABIB EL MASRY, *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹ *whipping him with oxen leather whips, hanging him on the hinbazin [a large wheel on which the person's body was hung that pinned the individual between the ground and the wheel and in order to squeeze and scrape him], tearing his body by dragging him across iron rods fixed in the ground, rubbing his body with coarse hair, putting flames under his body, and breaking his teeth. God, however, supported and healed Mina in everything*

¹ Iris HABIB EL MASRY, *ST Mīna Called The Wonder Worker*, July, 2022, p. 26.

¹ put his body for 3 days in the fire.

² J. CROMWELL, "Camel, O camel, come and fetch and carry": on two camels, 2015, p. 98.

² But the miracle happened that his body was saved from fire, during that time his sister barbered the Roman soldiers to take his corpse and she succeeded and put his body on a camel back and reached to a place near a well as the camel refused to move on, so his body was buried in this place.

After a while a sheperd passed as one of his sheep was fallen injured on his leg, but suddenly at the next day the injury was cured .

During the reign of the Roman emperor Zenon a daughter of one of the Nobles at Ethiopia she was suffered from a very dangerous disease (Leprosy) as she was advised to visit this site and she was lying beside the well till the morning and then she was completely cured!!!! Many nationalities were keen to take with them pottery vessels which contains oil or sacred water for healing purposes.

² J. B. WARD PERKINS, "The Shrine of St Minas in the Maryut", JSTORE, Vol, 17, p. 31-2.

² E. M. GABRIEL, *The History of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United States*, from the Land of the Pharaoh to the United States of America, 2021, chapter 14.

Two main dates were well preserved to be celebrated which were (15 Hatour (24 December) and 15 Paoni (22 June). *The first dates commemorates the martyrdom of St Mina while the second marks the consecration of his church at Maryut*² .

Some commanders who believed in Saint Mina like the pious military leader Athanasius, took the body of the Saint with him in his campaign against the Barbarians as a kind of blessing and protection² , through the blessings of⁵this Saint, he was able to defeat the Barbarians and celebrate his victory² . However; many of the soldiers who were responsible for transferring of Mar Mina`s body to king Mariout announced their belief in Christianity and the Christ and that was due to the miracle that they witnessed as they were able to defeat the dangerous creatures who attacked the boat carrying the Saint`s body to the burial place² .⁷

Moreover this place gained more importance in the late Roman Era due to the stories mentioned for the ability in curing any diseases in this place, especially after the appearance of a spring for healing water at the same site² .

The daughter of emperor of Constantinople suffered from a disease known as "Leprosy", she travelled to Mariout to gain blessings from the miracles of Mar Mina. After she slept in the holly place she dreamt with Mar Mina who asked her to search for his body by digging in the place she slept. The next day she found that she was completely cured, so she asked her soldiers to dig for the Saint`s body as a way of applying to the Saint`s command in her dream. The surprise was that she found his body which was honored by building a small chapel upon his tomb² .

Mar-Mina gained his fame in curing the diseases in a very young age and the many miracles were performed during his prayers. Moreover he held the title of "The Miracle Performer."³⁰

One of the most important verses from the Bible that he used for curing is the following:

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone among you cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the

² E. M. GABRIEL, *Ibid.*, chapter 14 ; N. A. ZAKRY, "The Iconography of Saint Minas in the Coptic Art", *Journal of the faculty of Tourism and Hotels- University of Sadat City*, Vol 1, p. 38, 2017.

² *The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr, The Miraculous Saint Mina*. Prepared and published by: Saint Mina Coptic Orthodox Monastery, Mariout, Egypt, 2005, p. 19.

² J. B. WARD PERKINS, "The Shrine of St Minas in the Maryut", *JSTORE*, Vol, 17, p.34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

² SH., SADEK" Saint Mina Mönastery in Arabic Sources", *Christianity and Monasticism in Northern Egypt*, (Ed.) by G. Gabra and H. N. Takla, American University Press, Cairo-New York, p. 23, 2017

² *The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr, The Miraculous Saint Mina*. Prepared and published by: Saint Mina Coptic Orthodox Monastery, Mariout, Egypt, 2005, p. 23.

³ Bishop Youssef, Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, St. Mina: Blessed With the Gift of Healing, <https://suscopts.org/resources/literature/177/st-Mina-blessed-with-the-gift-of-healing/> access in 7-8-2021.

church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (James 5:13-14)³ .¹

The Miracle of the Paralyzed man:

Once a paralyzed man who was sleeping in the church had a dream in which Saint Mina told him he would be cured if he would crawl over to the women's area and grab hold of a certain mute woman and squeeze her as hard as he could. Upon awakening in the dead of night he proceeded to do so³ .²

The woman awoke and began to scream for help, terrified, the man leapt to his feet and ran out of the church and across the desert - until he realized that he was no longer paralyzed and that the woman had been able to speak! So he returned to the church and told everyone about his dream. The miracle was recorded in the church annals³ .³

The monastery at king Mariout is considered one of the most important sites of pilgrimage according to the title of (St Mina ampullage), it was a small pottery jars or bottles made at Mariout, as the figure of the Saint was depicted in praying position with two camels, huge number of it were found in this place which proved that they used to take oil or water from the tomb of the Saint as kind of blessings and curing. However; many of these jars were found at Sudan in Africa which proved the spread of his miracles³ .⁴

His monuments are visited by a large number of believers. Large artistic collection were discovered in his monastery at king Mariout, that are displayed nowadays in the Coptic Museum in Cairo, Coptic churches and monasteries, and other international archaeological museums³ .⁵

Mar mina was not only considered as Miracle Performer but he was also considered as the patron of the travelers and desert caravans³ that resulted in building⁶ a small chapel covered by a cupola which was built over his tomb³ .⁷

³ Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by [Biblica, Inc.](https://www.bible.com/)® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

³ A. M. TALBOT, "Pilgrimage to the Healing Shrines : the Evidence of Miracle Accounts", *JSTORE*, Vol 56, 2002, p. 158.

³ *The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr, The Miraculous Saint Mina*. Prepared and published by: Saint Mina Coptic Orthodox Monastery, Mariout, Egypt, 2005, <https://suscopts.org/resources/literature/177/st-Mina-blessed-with-the-gift-of-healing/> access in 7-8-2021.

³ J. B. WARD PERKINS, "The Shrine of St Minas in the Maryut", *JSTORE*, Vol, 17, p.36.

³ J. KAMIL, "Religious Tourism as Big Business", *Al- Ahram Weekly*, 17-23 February 2000.

³ J. B. WARD PERKINS, "The Shrine of St Minas in the Maryut", *JSTORE*, Vol, 17, p. 35.

³ SH., SADEK., *Ibid.*, p. 24. ⁷

Recommendations:

- The visiting of the monastery needs long trips not short trips as the main complain of the visitors that the location of the monastery was not suitable for the short trips.
- The ruins of the Byzantine church is about 500 meters from the monastery itself that needs a sort of transportation³ . to be easily visited as well as adding signs to mark the place and a tour guide if possible.
- The site should be announced in the Touristic program to Egypt, especially because it was one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Egypt.
- The organizing of the trips should be considered to respect the sanctity of the place and avoiding any obstruction.
- As a way of respecting the sanctity of the place as well as keeping the spiritual feelings of the visit.
- To prevent the ancient monastery from being affected by the subterranean water an

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Conclusions:

- The monastery of Mar Mina is considered an important pilgrimage place for the Christians either the Egyptians or any other Natonality in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D.³ .⁹
- Saint Mina`s monastery at king Mariout is one of the cultural heritage sites in Egypt announced in the list of UNESCO in 1979.
- Saint Mina was famous for curing dangerous diseases by his miracles, something that reflects the continuous visits to his monastery at king Mariout to gain blessings from very ancient time up till now. Moreover; they used to buy oil jars and sacred water jars for the same purposes of curing and gaining blessings.
- However his fame was not only limited to his monastery at king Mariout, but it also reached his monastery at Foum El Khalig to which his body was transferred and buried there; as we have two stories explaining how the transferring of the body occurred:
 - 1- The 1st story mentioned that there was a virgin girl used to take care of his bones as he appeared to her in the dream to thank her and after that the

³ SH., SADEK, "Saint Mina & Monastery in Arabic Sources", in Christianity and Monasticism in Northern Egypt, edited by Gawdat Gabra, Hany. N. Takla, AUC, 2017, p. 21. Buses depart regularly from Alexandria's new station (Baheej Station), to Abu-Mina. After reaching Abu- Mina.

³ N., RAMZY, "Abu Mina Comple&x" One of the Five Most Historically Important Sites in Egypt is at Risk", conference Architectural Heritage and Cultural Identity, p. 91, 2004.

Christ appeared to Isac the priest and told him to transfer the body to Foum el Khalig.

2- The 2nd story it was like a vision narrated by the father Tadros Mina the head of the monastery of mar Mina at foum el khalig as following" one day he saw an old man wearing the uniform of a soldier and told him I am Minasarch for my body inside the church and in the next morning the father searched in a specific place and found the bones of the Saint in a tube and put it in front of the Icon of mar Mina.

- The irrigational and agricultural projects that occurred in the site resulted in the change of the situation of the land, from a desert state to an agricultural land full with subterranean water⁴ .
- The subterranean water lead to the erosion of the land which in turn caused the destruction of the ancient village, that made the ancient monastery at risk.
- The government adopted a big project for saving the endangered monasteries⁴ .

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Fig (1) The Martyr Mar Mina



Fig (2) picture of Mar Mina from inside the Church



⁴ N., RAMZY, *Ibid.*, p. 106. 0
⁴ N., RAMZY, *Op.cit*, p. 107. 1

Fig (3) The monastery of Mar Mina at Mariout



Fig (4) Deir Mar Mina



Fig (5) The interior of the Cathedral of St Mina



Fig (6) The entrance of St Mina monastery at Mariout

القديس مار ميّنا

صانع المعجزات

الملخص العربي:

مار ميّنا هو واحد من اهم واشهر القديسين حيث انه ابن لايوين مسيحيين ووالده كان محارب الذي مات مبكرا وحمل مار ميّنا نفس راية ابيه في الحروب, ولكن حدث ما لم يكن في الحسبان حيث حدثت لميّنا رؤية وهي رؤية ٤ ملائكة تتوجه وسرعان ماذهب ميّنا الى الحاكم الروماني واعلن اعتناقه للمسيحية وتعرض ميّنا للاضهاد والتعذيب لفترة طويلة حتى يرجع عن اعتناقه ولكن دون جدوى.

ظل مار ميّنا يدافع عن اعتناقه حتى تم قتله والقائه جسده في النار التي حافظت عليه وبدا بعد وفاته المعجزات العديدة ومنها الشفاء من امراض مستعصية مثل الجزام وغيرها من الامراض وانتشر صيته داخل وخارج مصر وتم دفن جسده في كينج ماريوط بناء على رغبة جسده الميت باعطاء امر للجبال بالوقوف وانزال جسده في هذا المكان وتم بناء دير وكنيسة بعد ذلك. تعددت انجازاته بعد وفاته وتم نقل جثمانه بامر من المسيح الذي ظهر في رؤية لاحد الكهنة في كنيسة مار ميّنا بقم الخليج وبالفعل تم نقل الجثمان هناك وزادت اهمية الكنيسة بعد نقل رفات جسده مار ميّنا الى قم الخليج.

الكلمات الدالة: موقع الدير- السيرة الذاتية- الاضهاد الذي تعرض له- وفاته