

Forgotten Past? Alternative Forms for Museological Approach to interpret Egypt's Maritime Heritage

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Abstract

In the past decades, Ministry of Antiquities (MA) has invested many efforts in excavating underwater archeological sites, and mapping them to reveal the navigation routes during ancient times. Remarkable discoveries have been made by the European Institute of Underwater Archeology (IEASM) as well as others archeological projects on Egypt's coasts.

Despite this wealth of Egypt's maritime history and intellectual resources, it lacks a Maritime Museum till present or even an exhibition gallery dedicated to elucidate maritime' legacies to the local community. It also lacks a special legal placement for Maritime cultural heritage with scientific management principles oriented towards interconnects the society, local governing authorities and museums professionals with cultural purposes to promote and preserve Maritime History of Egypt.

Maximizing awareness is the key element to preserve and publish the Maritime Heritage. So, How to make it accessible to the public? How to foster this richness past in the minds of young generations?

This paper presents approachable alternative forms to ensure effective engagement with the public and develop new strategies for sustainable future of Egypt's UCH.

Key words: Egypt, UCH, public engagement

Introduction

Maritime history of Egypt dates back to thousands of years where Egypt was at the center of the global commerce and at the axis of trade routes linking Asia, Europe, and Africa. It's blessed with a rich maritime history and diversity of underwater archeology holds the memories of our nation's past and the legacy of Egypt's history that still preserved beneath the sea.

Hence, this paper is rooted in several interconnected purposes and concerns contribute to developing understanding of maritime Egypt which is crucial for preserving and promoting the tangible and intangible of

maritime cultural of Egypt as living heritage. The central aim of this paper is to propose new alternative approaches to go beyond to raise interest among the public with maritime cultural, and foster the involvement of local community in an awareness-raising process lead to major endearment towards shaping the national identity of Egypt maritime.

The framework is consisting of three main sections 1) elucidate the historical value and cultural significance of Egypt maritime; 2) define how maritime cultural interpreted in the Egyptian antiquities museums; 3) setting up new effective solutions for imparting knowledge and information of Egypt's maritime and encourage interaction and engagement among the public.

1) The Cultural Setting

The cultural setting of maritime Egypt is commitment to two main factors; a) maritime material cultural that's derived from the human interaction with the seas, Nile river, lakes, etc (which is known today as maritime archeology); b) underwater archeology that is relate to the archeological sites submerged beneath the water in old times (Bass, 2013), taken into consideration that most of Egypt' underwater archeological sites of the Mediterranean Sea were originally maritime sites (served as trading ports) before disappearance in the waters due to seismic factors and geological subsidence (Stanley, et al., 2007).

A) Cultural significance of Maritime Egypt

'When the Nile covers the land, only the towns are visible above the water, and they look like nothing so much as the Aegean islands. The rest of Egypt becomes open sea, with only the towns rising up out of it'. (Herodotus II.97).

On the geography of the country, the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 484-425 BC) called Egypt *'the gift of the Nile'* (Herodotus, 1998). Egypt's

landscape is determined by the presence of the Nile River, the largest river in the world, stretching from Africa to the Mediterranean Sea, and unquestionably most important element for the geography of both ancient and modern Egypt (Rice, 2003, Shaw and Nicholson, 1995).

In addition to the riverine environment of Egypt, it has a special geographical location overlooking the Mediterranean Sea by the north and Red Sea by the east. With this unique nature, Egypt is considered in its role as seafaring nation influencing and interaction with others through well-established shipbuilding technology that permitted the Egyptians to sail round-trip journeys as early as ancient times. (Ward, 2012).

The wealth of maritime Egypt materials (textual, iconographic, and archeological) comes from the ancient Egyptian cultural, which is called 'Pharaonic Egypt' [Fig. 1] with many historical and archeological evidences provide significance data on the ancient Egyptian maritime activities and tasks; diversity of ships and boats representations, seafaring, sea power and naval forces operations, nautical expeditions, shipbuilding technology, models of boats left in tombs, full-size boats buried in the ground, mariners with their nautical titles, nautical themes within religious practices and much more meaningful resources reveals to what extent and variety the maritime influences on all levels of the ancient Egyptian civilization and penetrated in every aspect of its culture.

Period	Dynasty	Date
Paleolithic Era		Before 8000 BC
Neolithic Era		C.8000-4000 BC
Predynastic Period	<i>Maadi Culture</i> <i>Naqada I Culture</i> <i>Naqada II Culture *</i> <i>Naqada III Culture</i>	C.4000-3100 BC C.4000-3500 BC C.3500-3150 BC C.3150-3000 BC
Early Dynastic Period *	<i>Dynasties 1-2</i>	C.3000-2584 BC
Old Kingdom *	<i>Dynasties 3-6</i>	C.2584-2117 BC
First Intermediate Period	<i>Dynasties 7-10</i>	C.2117-2160 BC
Middle Kingdom	<i>Dynasties 11-12</i>	C.2161-1781 BC
Second Intermediate Period	<i>Dynasties 13-17</i> <i>(including Hyksos</i> <i>Period: dynasties 15-17)</i>	C.1781-1549 BC
New Kingdom *	<i>Dynasties 18- 20</i>	C.1549-1069 BC
Third Intermediate Period	<i>Dynasties 21-25</i>	1069-664 BC
Late Period *	<i>Dynasties 26-31</i>	664-332 BC
Graeco-Roman Period	<i>Macedonian Period</i> <i>Ptolemaic Period *</i> <i>(the Greek)</i> <i>Roman Period *</i>	332-304 BC 304-30 BC 30-640 AD
Islamic Period *	<i>Till Ottoman Period</i>	640-1805
Modern Era	<i>Khedival Period</i> <i>Monarchy</i> <i>Republic</i>	1805-1919 1919-1953 1953-till present

Fig. 1: Chronological Periods of Egypt. An asterisk (*) used to refers the periods mentioned in text.

This has been formulated with references to:

Shaw. G. J., *The Pharaoh. Life on court and on Campaign*, London, 2012.

Shaw, I., *the Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, 2000.

The petri Museum's Digital Egypt for Universities:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/chronology/index.html>

accessed on 10th of July 2017

It is worth mentioning that Egypt maritime had direct impact on the formation of the Egyptian state in Pharaonic times, as the earliest kings used maritime forces not only to facilitate communication and trade within Egypt and its neighbors, but also to conquer their enemies, threaten their rivals, and to consolidate their power (Gilbert, 2008).

Egypt's shipbuilding technology was well-developed by late Naqadah II period (Vinson, 2009) indicate considerable navigation linked Egypt with Asia to the east and Sudan to the south. Great innovation in nautical technology was promoted by Predynastic period, in which Egyptian kings sent mining expeditions involving maritime forces along the Nile and cross the Red Sea to the south of Sinai (Gilbert, 2008). [Fig. 2]

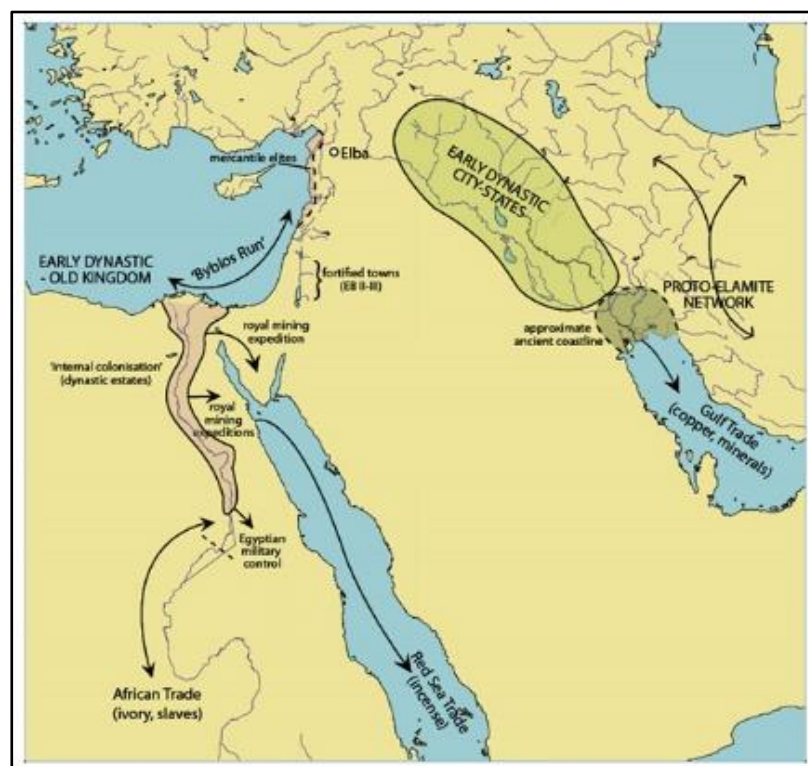


Fig. 2: Major trade routes used by Egyptian seafarers for mining and trade missions cross the Nile and the Red Sea's coastline during the Early Dynastic and Old Kingdom periods. (Gilbert, 2008)

The seafaring activities is documented since old Kingdom and continued throughout ancient Egyptian History referring to maritime Egypt contact with the Late Bronze Age civilizations of the Eastern Mediterranean and

Aegean (Vinson, 2009). The Egyptians seafarers used both the Red and the Mediterranean seas for military expeditions to protect Sea Power ashore, as well as tribute and trade expeditions to obtain valuable products (Gilbert, 2008). [Fig. 2]

Broad seagoing ships are seen in Queen Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt (probably the Horn of Africa) [Fig 3] provides clear evidences of seagoing ships arriving at Punt through the Red Sea. (Ward, 2012, Vinson, 1994, Landström, 1970).

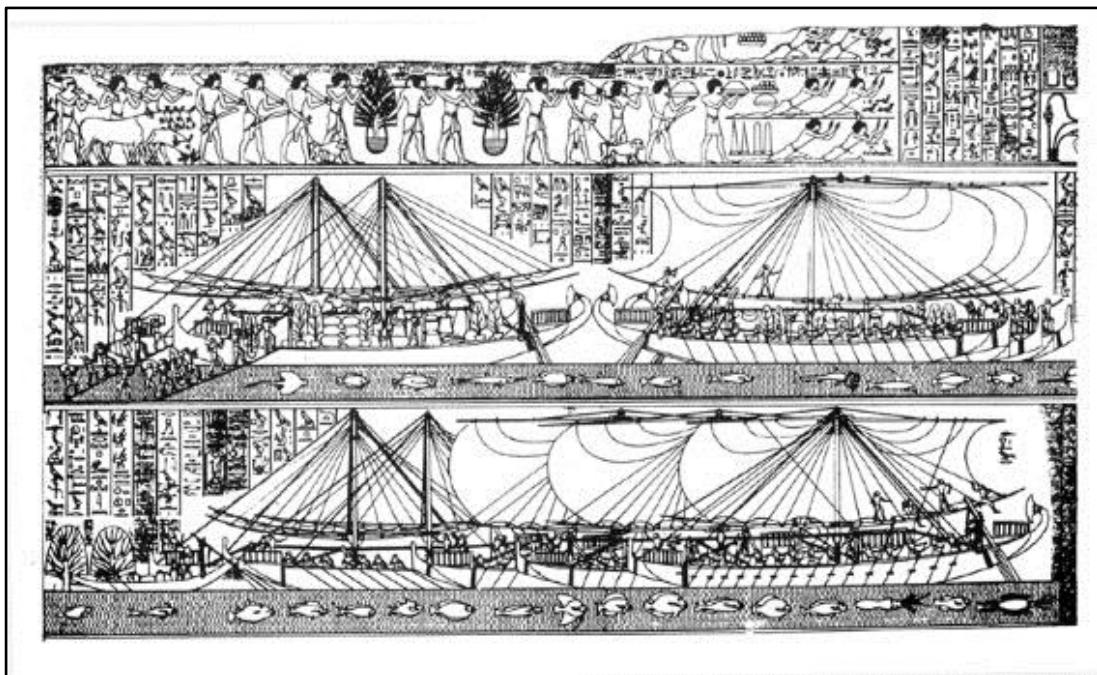


Fig. 3: Queen Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt commemorated in reliefs on her Funerary temple at Deir el Bahri, it is portray eight seagoing ships arriving at Punt loading with products. (Vinson, 1994)

Close relationship between both Egyptian and Greek Civilizations initiated in the Saite period through maritime trade cross the Mediterranean Sea admitted Greek and Phoenician traders into Egypt (Goddio. and Masson-Berghoff, 2016) up to the trading point of Naukratis at the east Delta. (Vinson, 2009) [Fig. 4] .After Alexander death 332 BC, the New city of Alexandria turned into one of the most important commercial port and

cultural centers of the Hellenistic Mediterranean (Vinson, 2009, Vinson, 1994).

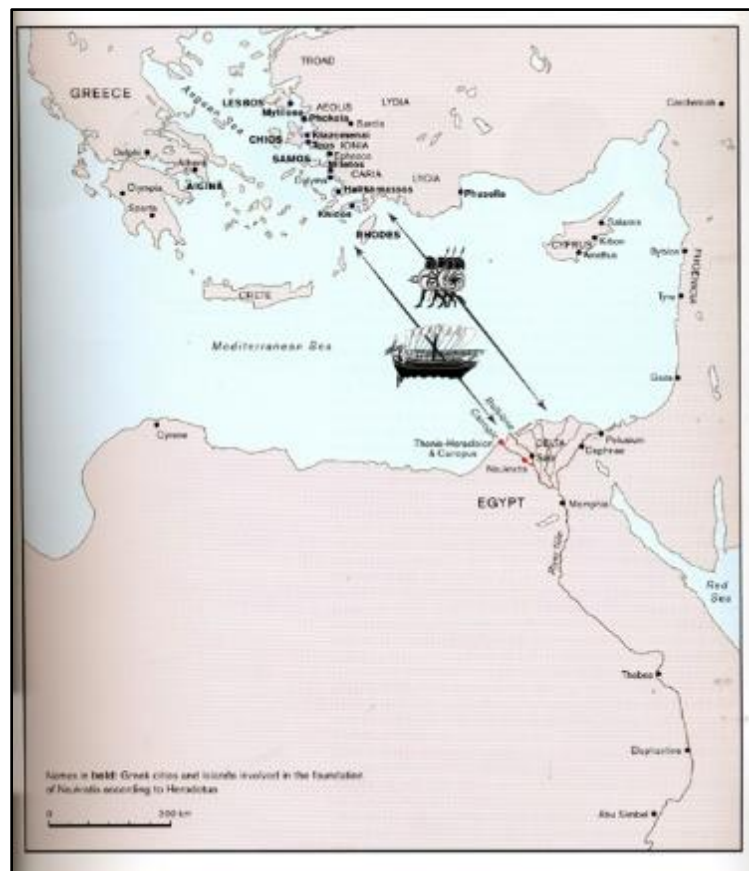


Fig. 4: Map of Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean illustrate the Greek cities and Island involved in the foundation of Naukratis according to Herodotus. (Goddio and Masson-Berghoff. 2016)

The eastern trade was facilitated by the construction of a canal linking the Nile to the Red sea. subsequently, an open-water trade route between Egypt and India has been established by the Roman period "*the Red Sea-Indian Ocean route*" turning Egypt into nexus of a far-flung international maritime system that tied the Mediterranean to distant ports in East Africa, Arabia, and India (Vinson, 2009, Meyer, 1992).

(A) Underwater Heritage

Beyond the evidences offered by the representations and epigraphy of ancient Egypt maritime, enormous numbers of archeological remains

submerged beneath the waters of the Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea, contribute information on new archeological sites with all its harbours, temples and towns that still preserved under the sea. In addition to large number of shipwrecks that's still lie on the seabed of both Mediterranean Sea and Red Seas.

Hence, Egypt's Underwater cultural Heritage (UCH) have been stepped in the beginning of the twentieth century with individual amateur efforts reflect the growing interest in Egypt's underwater archeology especially in Alexandria (Khalil and Moustafa 2002). In late 1996, the foundation of the Department for Underwater Antiquities (DUA) supervised by Ministry of Antiquities (MoA) to survey and carry out topographical study for the submerged landscape in collaboration with international institutions (Abd-el-Maguid, 2012). This has been resulted in the discovery of many new underwater archeological sites in the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Nile, and Lake Qarun, spans the history of different periods including the Pharaonic, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods (Abd-el-Maguid, 2012, Khalil and Moustafa 2002).

Major efforts are promoted by the Institut European d'Archeologie Sous-Marine (IEASM) in co-operation with MoA to allocate, identify and excavate the major ancient sites that vanished into the Mediterranean, specifically in the Eastern Harbours of Alexandria. It led to the rediscovery of two ancient sunken cities; Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus. (Goddio and Masson-Berghoff, 2016). Excavations uncovered monumental building, heads of Pharaohs, sphinxes, basins, columns, stelae, sizable assemblage of pottery and coins, and other significant colossal artifacts (Goddio and Masson-Berghoff, 2016, Goddio, 2007).

Archeological remains submerged in Red Sea indicate the wealth of UCH of the Red Sea with considerable efforts invested by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA-Egypt) and In Situ Institute working alongside with DUA to revealing and surveying Red Sea underwater heritage (Abd-el-Maguid, 2012).

2) Define and assess the presentation of maritime materials in the Egyptian Antiquities Museums

This approach is largely depends on How maritime Egypt exists within the narrative structure and communication styles of the Egyptian Antiquities museums? And how the social interaction formulation exists both within and beyond the museums walls? In fact, the answers to these questions have direct impact on the content, context and consequences of interpreting maritime heritage of Egypt.

Accordingly, we need first to examine the current museums setup that provides any context relate to maritime aspects of Egypt and obtain baseline information upon which we could define the missing aspects, subsequently generate creative solutions to messages communication and interpretation for the maritime heritage of Egypt.

Egypt has different types of museums, ranging in size and activity from main national museums to small provincial museums. They vary too in their purpose, their collections, the ways of display, and the public they seek to serve.

According to the programme set by the Ministry of Cultural and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (later MoA) in 2005, the Egyptian museums subdivided into five main categories; (1) Regional civilization museums (2) Site museums (3) Specialized museums (4) Graeco-roman, Coptic and Islamic museums (5) Main national museums (Hawass, 2005).

However, this classification did not support the national identity of the Egyptian heritage.

Doyon classify the full range of Egyptian museums by subject- type using the five basic distinction of archeology (from prehistoric to Islamic), history, art, ethnography, and natural history (Doyon, 2008). Compared with the classification and types of museums that are seen nowadays around the world, there is a specific type for maritime history and nautical activities specialized in displaying ships, navies, military use of the sea and all that is related to any human activity at the sea. (Bass, 2013, Neill and Krohn, 1991).

In this view, and despite the wealth of Egypt's maritime history and the massively intellectual resources, it lacks that type of maritime museum or even a comprehensive gallery disseminates the cultural identity of Egypt maritime and its legacies to the local community with well-constructed interpretive model.

Although that a wide range of archeological objects of ships, boats, and other related materials can be seen broadly in many galleries at the Egyptian museums, but the composition of the archeological displays does not elucidate the maritime heritage of Egypt at any level or reflect the historical and geographical significance of the Egyptian civilization that rely heavily on the development of the maritime and the utilization of the sea power (see Gilbert, 2008).

In researching the presentation of permanent displays for boats and ships among the Egyptian museums, two main museums become evident. One is Solar Boat Museum (Cheops) at Giza that displaying full-size vessel from ancient Egypt used for religious purposes. The other is that the local regional museum of Suez; the Suez National Museum which tells the

history of Suez Canal at ancient times, and displaying a round 1500 archeological artifacts span the full order of Egyptian history from prehistoric period till modern times with themes highlight on the Suez as an important port and navigational link at ancient Egypt, in addition to remarkable collection for boats accompanied with with maps and illustrations.

Both museums are classified as Archeological museums (Doyon), and the thematic archeological exhibits are avoiding constructing narrative that would inform the public about the existence of distinctive maritime cultural in Egypt, moreover they have yet to produce any educational programmes communicate the maritime pasts to the public.

Hence, it should be mentioning that, there is a series of exquisite touring exhibitions for Egypt's sunken treasures occurred throughout the last decade till present on loans to different destinations; France, United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, United states of America, Japan, presenting objects of underwater excavations of IESAM in collaboration with MoA (Goddio and Masson-Berghoff. 2016, Goddio and Clauss 2004). A variety of remarkable collections ranging between 250-500 underwater objects on displays in diverse venues all over the world attracting millions of visitors with focused scope on the lost world of the pharaohs beneath the sea and the relevant aspects of maritime Egypt.

A good example is the Sunken Cities Exhibition at the British Museum in 2016. The Exhibition's narrative aimed to explain the encounter between ancient Egypt and Greek with understanding of the deep and meaningful interconnection between both Greek and Egyptian Communities through many themes highlighting on the cultural integration between Egypt and Greek world through the Sea, religion aspects interaction, trade and exchange cross the open water of Mediterranean Sea, Thonis- Heracleon

and Naukratis as international ports, long history entanglement between Egypt and Rome, Navigation of Osiris boats (Goddio and Masson-Berghoff. 2016). The narrative is conveyed through a variety of explanation materials help communicate the information to the audience.

In comparison with the local underwater venues of Egypt, there are number of permanent exhibitions in Alexandria' museums dedicated to display the recent excavations of underwater archeology, but without constructive narrative for neither Egypt maritime, nor intended messages rendering cultural/historical interpretation for the displayed objects.

The concept is focusing only on presenting the recovered objects from the Eastern Harbour of Alexandria and Aboukir Bay and put them on display with textual description (artifacts labels) in different venues; the renovated Alexandria National Museum gallery presenting underwater artifacts, thematic section at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum demonstrate the submerged Antiquities, and part of the open –air landscape of the Roman Theater at Kom Al-Dikka display a number of underwater sculptures.

Noticeably, the absence of maritime identity in the exhibitions context is related to the narrative content which avoiding the maritime scope and subsequently affect all levels of presented information and related public programmes. The main intention is to display the archeological materials of maritime form archeological point of view without considering any conjunction with the distinctive cultural of maritime Egypt.

In general, the original formulation and fundamental structure of the display at all the Egyptian Antiquities museums derives from Egyptological and archeological prospective (Doyon, 2008). The methods of presentation the archeological collections rely on the repetition of certain

themes within the multiple periods of the ancient Egyptian history following the chorological order.

Within a larger framework of presentation maritime materials, there is an ambitious plan to establish Underwater Museum in Alexandria's bay supported by the Egyptian authorities and UNESCO to preserve and exhibit the underwater heritage of Alexandria in sit (.Abd-el-Maguid, 2012).

3) Proposing innovative ways for interpreting maritime Egypt

Maximizing awareness is the key element to preserve and publish the maritime heritage of Egypt and foster this richness past in the minds of young generations. Thus, this section aims to present approachable alternative forms to ensure effective engagement with the public and develop new strategies for sustainable future for Egypt's maritime and UCH through the following:

- **Formulating an illustrative and modern shape web-site for maritime**

It is now an uncontested fact that technology is pervasive throughout our lives; technology has become an integral part of the way that we communicate with each another and has increasingly taken the place of face-to-face communication (Kotler et al., 2008). We need to use these modern technologies advancement to communicate that level of engagement with the public and lead them gradually to embrace their maritime cultural heritage virtually.

This approach will provide comprehensive information and broader and more cohesive picture on the overall maritime heritage of Egypt; subsequently will open up new opportunities for public to learn about varied aspects of maritime and UCH in an engaging way. In fact, it will fill

the gap for the absence of maritime museum in Egypt and will serve as a powerful engine for regeneration both tangible and intangible maritime heritage of Egypt.

Keeping up with what the global museums offers nowadays for their users, and by adopting the current use of technologies and digital media particularly the revolutionary use of both AR and VR application and 3D modeling technology (Gutiérrez et al. 2016), this trend can take many forms; from building a virtual maritime museum with interactive stories arranged in chorological order (INDICAT, 2012), to diversity of meaningful visual narratives reveal the maritime legacies and the submerged heritage underwater arranged thematically, or virtual field trips to maritime cultural landscape and long coastlines of Egypt, or diving virtually into the depths of seas and encounter the treasures of the sunken cities, or using the visualization technology to reconstruct the UCH and maritime sites and get glimpse of lifestyles of the people in the past.

In this concern, it should referring to the remarkable efforts of IEASM in create reconstruction for the discovered underwater cities Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus, also the international harbour town of Naukratis with its Egyptian and Greek temples (Goddio and Masson-Berghoff, 2016) [Fig. 5].

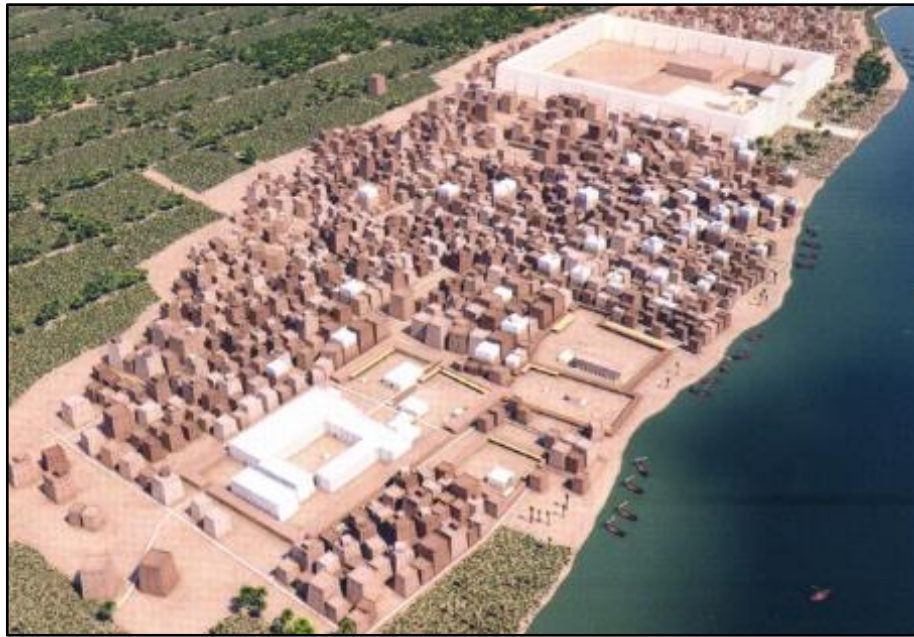


Fig. 5: Reconstruction of the international harbour town of Naukratis features the Egyptian and Greek temples. (Goddio and Masson-Berghoff, 2016)

These virtual experiences will promote the UCH and make it accessible to the public. On another hand, implementing interactive visualization technology and 3D modeling/mapping on underwater archeology will safeguard and preserve this endangered heritage under the seas.

This approach can be achieved through active collaboration between MoA and Center for Documentation of Cultural Heritage at Egypt (CULTNAT), with support from IEASM and together with other local and international cultural authorities that concerned with maritime cultural and underwater archeology.

- **Online Exhibitions for Maritime Series**

Indeed, online viewing of maritime cultural heritage whether movable (museums) or immovable (underwater archeological sites) will attract visitors and encourage them to make actual visits, but what if the visitors themselves share their maritime memories online?

Online Exhibition is online display of collections with the aim of engaging an audience that is not necessarily expert (Museum Association, 2011). It's a new approach allow to share the museum collection through build online exhibits with objects, and invite visitors to share their memories (INDICAT, 2012, Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, 2011).

This online experience is relatively affordable in comparison to other techniques of display and considered to be interactive digital experience allows to use social media and search to build audiences, thus, it is two – way conversation process with the audience provide immersive engagement to the maritime cultural (Museum Association , 2011).

In fact, these online maritime series can serve as social media platforms help in building maritime memories and promote two- ways communication with the local community through offering them the opportunity to share their maritime stories and other related memories. Hence, it can used broadly to preserve the intangible heritage and oral history of Egyptian maritime identity and linked the public with their maritime history as living heritage.

- **Visitor Center as interpretive tool for maritime cultural heritage of Egypt**

Visitor center is a powerful tool can be used effectively in the raising awareness process to stimulate the public towards understating their history of both maritime and the underwater archeology. visitor center has been identified as physical buildings located in a city or in historical and natural sites to provide visitors with services and information, it vary from a small building with modest services to great one with entertainment center and even a museum. (Mohamed, 2015, Pearce, 2004).

One of the main aspects of the visitor center is adopting interpretation content and technological components to communicate the provided information and related context to users (visitors, staff, and local community) (Pearce, 2004). Due to the International Conference organized by the Getty Conservation Institute and Paul Getty Museum in May 1995, the main role of visitor center is to prepare the visitor to enjoy and understand the history behind the archeological site using different interpretive tools accompanied with walking tours whether guided or independent. (Mohamed, 2015).

Bibliotheca Alexandrina (semi-governmental institution), one of the main cultural institute in Egypt has published a book stressing the importance of visitor center in Egyptian community as a crucial tool for the preservation of archeological sites as well as participate in the community development (Hassan and Youssef 2008).

In this light, considering a visitor center at the coasts of both Mediterranean and Red seas will emphasize particular interest for the local community and enabling them to understand the precious maritime heritage of Egypt.

In the same context, it should be referring to the ambitious project that carried out in 2008 with the purpose of creating a network of visitors centers in the southern region of the Red Sea, entitled; ' Visitor Center Information Distribution Network –VCIDN' from Marsa Allam to Shalateen within a distance of 200 km. among the overall objective of this project, it aim to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and marine history environment of the Red Sea region. Despite the construction of these networks of visitors' centers, it didn't open to the public till present. (USAID 2008).

Another project in the Red Sea region funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) regarding the restoration and transformation of historical ottoman fort dates back to 1571 at the Quseir (located on the Red Sea ashore) into heritage visitor center with the involvement of the local communities. It served as learning center teaching the history of the Red Sea' legacy to the local by using creative interpretive methods (e.g. they were able to revive the oldest fishing boat used in the port called the Gatira and create an identical replica based on the local's memories). Unfortunately, after shifting this center under the jurisdiction of MoA, it loses many of its authenticity as heritage building due to lack of training for the staff. (Mohamed, 2015)

However, the proposed venues for creating visitor center for interpreting the context of Egypt maritime and UCH can be located in different places; in the Red sea coastline; underwater archeological sites of Mediterranean Sea coastline particularly at Alexandria as a unique attraction point for both tourists and locals; the Bibliotheca Alexandrina or Qaitbay fort -the top-visited cultural site in Alexandria- since they both overlooking the Mediterranean Sea; or we might consider using one of the historical buildings in the Alexandria and transformed into a visitor center.

This visitor center of maritime cultural and UCH could enrich both locals and tourists with a wide variety of maritime topics and encourage them to visits museums, thus will lead them to deeper engagement with the displays of sunken treasures collections and other related exhibitions in the Alexandria museums.

- **Cultural Network**

Egypt lacks a special legal placement for Maritime cultural heritage with scientific management principles oriented towards interconnects the

society, local governing authorities and museums professionals with cultural purposes to promote and preserve maritime history of Egypt.

In this regard, we need to fostering cooperation on international scale between MoA, Alexandria Centre for Maritime Archaeology, IEASM, together with UNESCO and ICOM committee for Maritime ICMM, and all relevant stakeholders to build up a "cultural network" tasked with developing sustainable strategies for preserving and communicating maritime cultural heritage of Egypt. The focused actions should be 1) Create thorough databank compiles all the UCH sites and maritime resources of Egypt both tangible and intangible; 2) create cultural map for all UCH sites and maritime sites of Egypt ; 3) develop methodology with standards and guidelines for promoting social and cultural programmes to the local community education; 4) set up implementation strategies for disseminating explanation materials and information, as well as collaborative projects with community participation.

- **Heritage Tours and Water Adventures**

By recognizing the vast submerged landscape that facing the Mediterranean and Red Seas, daily nature cruises and heritage tours with interpretive storytelling and explanatory materials can help the audiences to unlock the historic past beneath the water and had immersive engagement with maritime legacy. This might be led by museums staff, DUA staff, trained docents.

In conclusion

Egypt's maritime cultural is rich and diverse; its tangible and intangible aspects exerted a dominating influences on the formation and consolidation of the Egyptian civilization and its interconnection with the neighbors. Maritime Egypt still not defined, it is in need to identified,

explained and interpreted as powerful tool for the Egyptian history linked the public with their maritime national identity, and affect on their perception to the riverine and maritime nature of modern Egypt through developing and delivering meaningful and engagement offerings.

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Biography

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