



The Revival of Madinet Madi
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Abstract

Several authors have contributed to our understanding of the concept of neglected heritage as well as to our interpretation of the various aspects of such heritage whether tangible or intangible. In various destinations, however, heritage assets are marginalized and forgotten. Central to this is the fact that the survival of human heritage is not limited to the physical preservation and maintenance of heritage assets but extends to include the interpretation, documentation and transmission of the knowledge embodied in them from a generation to another. In Egypt, there are several cultural heritage sites/monuments that are of great historic significance, even though little is known about them in contemporary times. Besides, the contribution of such sites to the country's cultural tourism product is hardly noticeable. The current paper investigates the potential contribution of Al Fayoum governorate to the Egyptian cultural tourism product with particular emphasis on the historical site of Madinet Madi. The paper concludes with a number of recommendations on how to promote the country's neglected heritage with specific consideration to the historic site of Madinet Madi.

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Introduction

Heritage is a concept to which most people would assign as a positive value that everyone benefits from. Hence, the protection, preservation and conservation of such heritage is regarded as a shared responsibility of everyone¹. In many countries however, heritage assets may be marginalized, neglected or forgotten simply because nothing has been done to introduce them to the world in a way that exemplifies their true value and narrates the true stories behind them. Moreover, in such a changing world, cultural resources are often subject to the ravages of economic developments that often fail to take into consideration the tangible and intangible benefits that can be accrued from mobilizing such resources as assets for both economic and human development². Additionally, despite the on-going contribution of various concerned international bodies to the conservation and promotion of heritage assets across the globe, it is argued that “the 21st century is blamed every other day for failure to preserve and promote cultural heritage”³.

Central to this is the fact that “while some ideals of beauty may be eternal, the works of art and of human ingenuity that convey the beauty through time are fragile and hard to replace”⁴. Here it’s worth noting that the survival of cultural heritage,⁵ does not only depend on the physical preservation and maintenance of heritage assets as even when the monuments and belongings of our past ancestors are still surviving, their meaning may be still lost forever if the knowledge embodied in them is not

¹H. Silverman and D. Ruggles, *Cultural Heritage and Human Rights*, Springer, USA., 2007, p. 3-5.

² F. Hassan and M. Yousef, *Introduction, Cultural Heritage and Development in the Arab World*, Egypt, 2008, p.1, URL: http://www.bibalex.org/arf/en/gra1106_df_20081102_book.pdf

³N. Evelyne, *21st Century: No Excuse to Neglect Cultural Heritage*, Stephen Rwangyezi: *Ugandan Cultural Protagonist*, International National Trusts Organization (INTO), Uganda, July 25, 2014. URL: <https://into.org/7074>

⁴A. Vassiliou, *Protecting our heritage is a shared responsibility*, EU Presidency Conference, “Heritage First! Towards a Common Approach for a Sustainable Europe” Athens, 6 March 2014, p.1.

URL: file:///Users/macbookpro/Downloads/SPEECH-14-188_EN.pdf

⁵I. Seragelden, *Foreword, Cultural Heritage and Development in the Arab World*, 2008, Egypt, p. 6. http://www.bibalex.org/arf/en/gra1106_df_20081102_book.pdf



preserved and transmitted from a generation to another. Thus, it is argued that the relevance of cultural heritage depends mainly on the efforts of every generation to re-discover and re-interpret it in what could be described as a chain of shared knowledge and experience that should never be broken⁶.

In other words, the survival of human heritage is not limited to the physical preservation or maintenance of heritage assets but extends to include the interpretation, documentation and transmission of the knowledge embodied in them from a generation to another⁷. In addition, the conservation of heritage assets is not limited to physical intervention, but also includes activities such as the interpretation and sustainable management of such assets through identifying, understanding and defining cultural values and their significant attributes on one hand and understanding the value heritage may have to their owners, the local communities and other interested parties on the other hand⁸.

In this respect, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, has indicated that historic buildings and places in Asia for instance as well as in other places elsewhere have been forgotten due to a number of reasons among which are the lack of documentation and understanding of the architecture value. However, in other cases it has been mentioned that architecture and places are forgotten not only because the misconception of what is valuable but also because they are perceived as ordinary where the survival of heritage is often threatened by rapid economic expansion and social transformation⁹.

⁶A. Vassiliou, *Protecting our heritage is a shared responsibility*, EU Presidency conference, "Heritage First! Towards a Common Approach to a Sustainable Europe" European Commission, 2014, Athens, 6 March, P.1.

⁷*ibid*, P.1

⁸ Council of Europe, *Guidelines on Cultural Heritage: Technical Tools for Heritage Conservation and Management*, JP-EU/COE, Support to the Promotion of Cultural Diversity (PCDK), 2012 URL: <https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/cooperation/Kosovo/Publications/Guidelines-ENG.pdf>

⁹International Council on Monuments and Sites, *Asian Forgotten Heritage - perception, preservation and presentation*, ICOMOS Thailand International Conference, Chiang Mai,



Egypt encompasses various heritage sites that are of great cultural significance to humanity. Nevertheless, some of which are hardly recognized and little is known about the knowledge embodied in them in contemporary times. The economic contribution of such sites to the country's tourism product as well as to the local community is also hardly noticed¹. Today, many heritage sites in Egypt are subject to neglect either due to the lack of funding or due to the decreased awareness of their significance. Many of which are also threatened by means of urbanization and its corresponding effects like pollution and land reclamation or by means of looting the country's valuable pieces of human heritage¹.

The oasis of Fayoum¹ is strongly characterized by a rich collection of varied and important cultural resources including important archaeological sites¹ that testify to the political and economic significance of the area since the Middle Kingdom when the royal residence at Lisht and Fayoum saw the improvement of the territory and the rise of numerous cities and temples¹. It encompasses tens of Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic and Islamic heritage sites¹ as well as a wide variety of natural resources and

Thailand, (15-16 Oct. 2013), URL: <http://www.icomos.org/en/get-involved/stay-informed/calendar/328#chiang-mai-thailand>

¹ United Nations Development Program, *Institutional Support to the Supreme Council for Antiquities For Environmental Monitoring and Management of Heritage Sites: Applications to Fayoum Oasis and North Saqqara Necropolis*, Egyptian Italian Environmental Cooperation Program, 2004, Phase II, URL:

https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/EGY/00034204_ISSEM%20Prodoc.pdf

¹ J. Abd El-Kafy, *The Role of the UNESCO in Supporting the Tourism Activity in Egypt*, unpublished Phd. Thesis, 2012, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt.

¹ One of the poorest governorates in Egypt that is recently ranked among the sixth governorates in the level of human development and the fourth lowest per capital income of Egypt's governorates as per records of the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, 2013.

¹ For example Madinet Madi,³ Khelua, Teptinis, and Kasr Qarun.

¹ R. Hewtson, *Fayoum: History and Guide*, American University in Cairo Press, 2008, p.

¹ M. Khalifa and S. El-Khateeb, *Fayoum Oasis Between Problems and Potentials: Towards Enhancing Ecotourism In Egypt*, URBENVIRON, 4th International Congress on Environmental Planning and Management Green Cities: A Path to Sustainability December 10 – 13, Cairo,



protected areas¹ with rich heritage of paleontological, archaeological, and geological exposures¹ .

Nevertheless, despite the ample business opportunities, Al Fayoum may provide as a potential destination for both cultural and natural tourism, it is not adequately promoted by tour operators¹ . Besides, residents of⁸the area suffer much from the lack of awareness of tourism assets in their surroundings. Their involvement in tourism activities is also quite minimal. There is also a noticeable shortage in the provision of accommodation and tourism services in the governorate¹ . Moreover, many unexplored ruins dating back to the Pharaonic, Greco-Roman and Christian eras are threatened by illegal excavations that are carried out by visitors and people from neighboring areas² . Furthermore, despite⁹the attempts to implement tourism development plans in the area, very few of which have managed to achieve their goals. This may be regarded to various reasons including: the lack of financial resources, the conflict between relevant authorities, environmental deterioration and decreased awareness of local community² .

Central to Al Fayoum's capacity to provide visitors with a distinctive cultural tourism experience, the governorate houses many important

2011 and El-Gouna, Egypt, URL: http://www.cpas.egypt.com/pdf/Samah_ELKhateeb/PAPER/1

¹ For example, Lake Qaroun,⁶Wadi El-Rayan, and Wadi El- Hitan.

¹ H .Mansour and A. Shabáan, *Algae of soil surface layer of Wadi Al-hitan protective area (world heritage site)*, El-fayoum depression, Egypt. 2010, Journal of American Science, 6(8),243–255

¹ J. Reid, *Medinet Madi (MadinatMadi) in the Fayoum of Egypt*, Tour Egypt, URL: <http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/Medinetmadi.htm>

¹ M. Soliman, *The role of⁹Tourism Strategic Marketing in Strengthening the Competitive Capability of the Northern Upper Egypt Region*(PhD), Fayoum University, Egypt, 2010

² Y. Ramzy, *Sustainable tourism development in AlFayoum Oasis, Egypt*, Ecosystems and Sustainable Development IX, WIT Transactions on Ecology and The Environment, Vol 175, 2013 WIT Press, p. 169, www.witpress.com, URL: <http://www.witpress.com/Secure/elibrary/papers/ECO13/ECO13014FU1.pdf>

² *Ibid.*, p. 170



historical monuments of which Medinet Madi is the most significant². This ancient city is one of the most isolated in Al-Fayoum region, but this is also part of its appeal, as you're often alone out in the blowing sand that drifts over the heads of the stone sphinxes. This most prominent ancient town is located on a small hill commanding a strategic position guarding the southwestern entrance to the Fayoum, north of El-Gharaq basin². and was probably occupied even as early as the prehistoric period. Today Medinet Madi, the four thousand years ago village, constitutes a part of the first Egyptian naturalistic and archaeological park that is connected by a 28 Km scenic desert trail that leads to Wadi Rayan, the protected natural park in which the famous valley of the whales, Wadi Al Hitan, is located². However, visiting the site requires a four-wheel drive vehicle, as there is no real track to the site. Alternatively, visitors will have to walk 2kms across the sand from the highway near Abu Gandir², the nearest village, to reach

the site². Although the site is difficult to reach, the ruins it encompasses are interesting and picturesque².

However, the entire area of Medinet Madi has become the first archaeological and natural park in Egypt, a buffer zone² was created

² G. Esposito, *Discovering MedinetMadi the first archaeological park in Egypt*, Community Times, June 19, 2014, URL: <http://communitytimes.me/discovering-medinet-madi-the-first-archaeological-park-in-egypt/>

² P. Davoli, *Medinet Madi, The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, 2012, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., URL: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah15260/abstract>

² G. Esposito, *op.cit.*, *Discovering MedinetMadi the first archaeological park in Egypt*, p.2

² Edda Bresciani, Ali Radwan, Antonio Giammarusti, Hisham el-Leithy, *Medinet Madi, Archaeological Guide*, Verona 2010, p. 44-47

² Paolo Davoli, *L'archeologia urbana nel Fayoum id età ellenistica e romana*, Naples 1998, p. 223

² S. Simkin, MedinetMadi, "City of The Past", Travels with Sheila, January 11, 2013, URL:

file:///Users/macbookpro/Desktop/Medinet%20Madi,%20_City%20of%20The%20Past_%20-%20Travels%20With%20Sheila.htm

² A **buffer zone** is generally a zonal area that lies between two or more other areas (often, but not necessarily, countries,) but depending on the type of buffer zone, the reason for it may be to



around Medinet Madi, in order to better protect the archaeological area and to better limit the future agricultural invasion of the site ². The path to access the site has been carefully planned, so that the visitor begins the journey from the southern altar, along what was once in ancient times the processional route for the cult statues of the temples of the site. Visitors then pass through about 280 m of the site up to the north side, where there is a large square of the Roman Era. In the archaeological park, the Visitor Center was built, integrating local traditional forms and materials, in accordance with the surrounding landscape. It was created with the intention of having a minimal impact on the archaeological remains. The center provides a comprehensive view of the history of the site and of the whole Fayoum area, through replication of stele and statues found in Madinet Madi, information boards, photographs and scale models of monuments. The Visitor Center also features a café, a library and a conference room. In addition, an eco-lodge offers the visitors a place for rest and leisure, and the possibility of staying overnight in the vicinity of the monuments. The project gives one of the most beautiful sites in the world back to the Land of the Pharaohs, integrating it within a natural park where between the desert hills, sand dunes and ponds live more than 160 species of birds. The importance of this archaeological- naturalistic

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segregate regions or to conjoin them. Buffer zones have various purposes, political or otherwise. They can be set up to prevent violence, protect the environment, protect residential and commercial zones from industrial accidents or natural disasters, keep prisoners intent on escaping from rapidly acquiring hostages or a hiding place, and have uses in several other scenarios. Buffer zones often result in large uninhabited regions which are themselves noteworthy in many increasingly developed or crowded parts of the world.

² ISSEMM, is a multidisciplinary program funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005-2011) – Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGDC). Started in 2005, ISSEMM was able to revive an important archaeological site, Medinet Madi, dating back to 4,000 years ago. The current phase of the project (2013-2014), named ISSEMM 3/Management, Maintenance and Permanent Opening of Medinet Madi Archaeological Park, is financed by the Italian-Egyptian Debt for Development Swap Program. ISSEMM is an example of fruitful cooperation among Italian Cooperation (Italian-Egyptian Debt Swap Program), SCA (Supreme Council of Antiquities), Ministry of Tourism, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), Pisa University, and renowned Italian and Egyptian Egyptologists and experts.



pathway lies in having created a new model of cultural and ecotourism³ in Egypt as an alternative to the 'hit and run', usually proposed by the tour operators³.

Moreover, Madinet Madi is considered the most important archeological site of the Fayoum region³, since it is referred to as 'Luxor of the Fayoum'. It is noted for the only well-preserved Middle Kingdom temple with hieroglyphic writings and carved scenes that few of which have survived in Egypt³, as well as other monuments of Ptolemaic, Roman and Coptic Era. In the Middle Kingdom the town was called *Dja*, but not much is known about the town in this period apart from the well preserved temple³. The main temple of the site was founded during the reigns of Amenemhet III and IV, of the 12th Dynasty. The temple was dedicated to the triad Sobek³, Renunutet³ and Horus of Shedet³⁶. At its peak, this

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³ Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education".

³ G. Esposito, *Discovering Medinet Madi the first archaeological park in Egypt*, June 2014, p.1-3.

³ S. Bayfield, *MedinetMadi (Narmouthis)*, Egyptian Monuments, Faiyum, Lower Egypt, Feb. 15, 2009, URL: <https://egyptsites.wordpress.com/2009/02/15/medinet-madi/>

³ Lonely planet, *Madinet Madi*, 2016, URL: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/egypt/medinat-al-fayoum/sights/historic/medinet-madi>

³ The inner chambers of the temple are the oldest of the structure which is one of the few surviving monuments of the middle kingdom. The temple's inner chambers, made of dark sandstone, are the oldest part of it. They represent rare model of a Middle Kingdom monumental construction. This part of the temple is rather small, with a two Papyrus columned portico leading into a sanctuary with three shrines containing statues of the deities and the kings Amenemhat III and IV. Although the 12th Dynasty reliefs are quite damaged, it is possible to see depictions of pharaohs Amenemhat III and his son and co-regent Amenemhat IV offering to deities in the shrines³ as well as depictions of the cobra-headed goddess Renenutet

³ The crocodile god, Sobek (also called Sebek, Sochet, Sobk, and Sobki), in Greek, Suchos and from Latin *Suchus*, was an ancient Egyptian deity with a complex and fluid nature. He is associated with the Nile crocodile and is either represented in its form or as a human with a crocodile head. Sobek was also associated with pharaonic power, fertility, and military prowess, but served additionally as a protective deity with apotropaic qualities, invoked particularly for protection against the dangers presented by the Nile river.

³⁶ Renenutet, also transliterated Ernütet and Renenet, was a serpent goddess of nourishment and the harvest in ancient Egyptian religion. The importance of the harvest caused people to make



temple would have been a place for breeding and nurturing sacred crocodiles in preparation for them to be mummified for sale to pilgrims³. The temple remains are in a well-preserved condition, probably due to its isolated location, but they are always threatened by the encroaching sands of the desert³. The temple still functioned in the New Kingdom where King Merenptah placed a statue of himself into the temple after restoring it. Moreover, the name of King Oserkon of the 23rd dynasty was also found written on the temple walls, after whom the place was abandoned⁴.

many offerings to Renenutet during harvest time. Initially, her cult was centered in Terenuthis. Renenutet was envisioned, particularly in art, as a cobra, or as a woman with the head of a cobra. Sometimes, as the goddess of nourishment, Renenutet was seen as having a husband, Sobek. He was represented as the Nile River, the annual flooding of which deposited the fertile silt that enabled abundant harvests. More usually, Renenutet was seen as the mother of Nehebkau, who occasionally was represented as a snake also. When considered the mother of Nehebkau, Renenutet was seen as having a husband, Geb, who represented the Earth. Later, as a snake-goddess worshiped over the whole of Lower Egypt, Renenutet was increasingly associated with Wadjet, Lower Egypt's powerful protector and another snake goddess represented as a cobra. Eventually Renenutet was identified as an alternate form of Wadjet, whose gaze was said to slaughter enemies. Wadjet is the cobra on the crown of the pharaohs.

³ Crocodile (also read as Sheh'djw) is the provisional name of a pre-dynastic ruler, who might have ruled during the late Naqada III epoch. The few alleged ink inscriptions showing his name are drawn very sloppily, and the reading and thus whole existence of king "Crocodile" are highly disputed. His tomb is unknown.

³ Historvius, *Medinet Madi Temple*, URL: <http://www.historvius.com/medinet-madi-temple-1505/>

³ It was the papyrologist Achille Vogliano from the University of Milan that found Medinet Madi. He conducted excavations from 1935 to 1939 until the outbreak of World War II halted any initiative on the site. What he managed to bring to light, while representing about half of what today the Italian-Egyptian team has discovered, however was the start of a major, new campaign of research. They found the temple of Isis Ermuthis (the Greek version of Renenutet) and they identified the Middle Kingdom temple of Amenemhet III of the 12th Dynasty. From 1966 to 1969 the digs in Medinet Madi were resumed by the University of Milan, under the direction of prof. Edda Bresciani. Since 1978, the University of Pisa, under the direction of prof. Edda Bresciani, has had the archaeological concession of the site.

⁴ S. Bayfield, *op.cit.*, *Medinet Madi (Narmouthis)*, p. 45.



In the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods it was called Narmuthis.⁴ People settled here again in Ptolemaic times⁴. The main temples are in the Western part of the town. There is a long processional way going north to South. The town never had walls. However under emperor Diocletian there was built a castrum⁴ north east of the town. The fortress is square with the main entrance in the South⁴. At each corner there was a tower. However, during the Greco-Roman period it was consecrated to Isis, Thermounis, and Soknopaios⁴. During the Ptolemaic period many establishments have also been added to the northern and the southern sides of the Middle Kingdom temple⁴. The Ptolemaic extension of the temple included the processional way to the south with its lions and sphinxes bearing both Egyptian and Greek style, which passed through a columned kiosk which eventually leads to the older two columned portico. It was probably Ptolemy IX Soter II who also added three courtyards, along with other expansion elements. Dating back to the Graeco-Roman period, the temple contains also a few relieves and hieroglyphic inscriptions⁴.

The sand that had naturally accumulated over time around the temple was removed, and the other monuments that have been found have been extensively restored. During the removal of the sand, a number of

⁴ E. Bresciani, *KomMadi 1977¹e 1978. Le pitturemurali del cenotafio di AlessandroMagno*, Pisa 1980, p. 20

⁴ The Ptolemaic town was laid out on a grid pattern and is about 1000 × 600 m big.

⁴ In the Roman Empire, the Latin word **castrum**, plural **castra**, was a building, or plot of land, used as a fortified military camp. *Castrum* was the term used for different sizes of camps including a large legionary fortress, smaller *auxiliary* forts, temporary encampments and "marching" forts. The diminutive form *castellum* was used for fortlets, typically occupied by a detachment of a *cohort* or a *century*. In English, the terms "Roman fortress", "Roman fort" and "Roman camp" are commonly used for *castrum*. However, scholastic convention tends toward the use of the word "camp", "marching camp" and "fortress" as a translation of *castrum*

⁴ The measurements of which are 50×50 m.

⁴ *Explore Fayoum, Medinet Madi; Narmouthis*, *op.cit.* p. ,

⁴ E. Bresciani, *KomMadi 1977¹e 1978. Le pitturemurali del cenotafio di AlessandroMagno*, *op.cit.*, p.30.

⁴ *Explore Fayoum, Madinet Madi; Narmouthis*, *op.cit.*, p.



sensational finds, from the archaeological point of view, were found, among which are the two pairs of lions positioned at the entrance of the dromos dedicated to the goddess Ermuthis, the Hellenistic temple in the south kiosk, and then, in front of the north side of the kiosk and in very good condition, the majestic lioness with the main nursing, which is unique in the ancient world. The religious meaning of this monument is still not certain and enigmatic.

The excavations at the site further uncovered an archive of Greek texts, which refer to the city as Narmouthis. They also found a separate crocodile-cult temple where the beasts appear to have been bred in captivity – a cache of eggs was found, along with bodies of the creatures in various stages of development. Often they were sacrificed when still quite young.

Here in Byzantine Times the population moved to the southern part of the town. Several churches were erected. The town was still occupied after the Arab conquest of Egypt, but was abandoned after the ninth century. The name Madi, which means “City of the Past”, seems to have originated from the Arab existence. A document, dates back to the ninth century AD., has been found in the site mentioning Madi as the name of the site⁴.

Classifications and Description of the temples:

Temple A, Middle Kingdom Temple⁴, The Renenutet temple:

Today, the most interesting structure is of course the southern facing temple with its Ptolemaic addition, located just over a mound beyond the Italians' old dig house. Though there is little left of this building, and though everywhere there is debris, what does remain of the temple is

⁴ Explore Fayoum, Madinet Madi Narmouthis, Dec. 2013, URL: <http://fayoumegypt.com/medinet-madi-narmouthis/#more-309>

⁴ According to Zahi Hawass, a former Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA). Medinet Madi is the only intact temple still existing from the Middle Kingdom. The temple's foundations, administrative buildings, granaries and residences were recently uncovered by an Egyptian archaeological expedition in early 2006.



fairly well preserved⁵. Every so often, the antiquity authorities must come along and clean out the sand, but typically one can see, from the top of the mound, the processional way which is part of the Ptolemaic construct, flanked by sphinxes and lions and these days, a considerable amount of other Ptolemaic Period construction. The human headed ones probably portray the facial features of one of the Ptolemaic kings. On the right side of the entrance portal is a smiling lion with crossed paws, while the inner left wall is engraved with the relief of a goddess, probably Hermouthis, suckling her son. Indeed, this is one of the few buildings that allow the visitor to sense a sanctuary as it was seen by the ancient priests. This temple was dedicated to Sobek and his consort Renenutet, along with their son, a form of Horus. These depictions of Renenutet are very rare⁵. Inside there are representations of Amenemhet III and his son, Amenemhet IV who finished the temple, making offerings to Sobek and Renenutet. Many of the hieroglyphic inscriptions remain on the walls, although faint, often can still be read. All of the inscriptions on the western side of the temple belong to Amenemhet III, while those on the eastern wall are those of this son. The dark sandstone inner part of the temple consists of a small papyrus-columned hall leading to a sanctuary comprising three shrines (niches) occupying the rear, each containing statues of deities. The two large papyri-form columns in the first room have identical inscriptions to Renenutet, except that the column on the left bears the two names of Amenemhet III, while that on the right belong to Amenemhet IV. On the wall on the left side of this room is a relief depicting the purification of the king. Here, god Sobek⁵, is recognized by his crocodile snout, depicted standing before the king while Anubis stands behind the king. The two gods pour purifying water over the king's head. As we see in other such reliefs, the drops of water take the form of the ankh, the hieroglyphic symbol of life. The inscription here is still legible,

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⁵ E. Bresciani, Antonio Giamfarusti: *I templi di Medinet Madi nel Fayum*, Pisa 2015, p. 85.

⁵ B. Adams: *Ancient Hierakonpolis*. Aris and Phillips, Warminster 1974, p. 15 - 19, obj. 2.

⁵ M. Zecchi: *Sobek of Shedet², The Crocodile God in the Fayyum in the Dynastic Period*. Todi, Perugia 2010, p. 5-6.



and can be translated as, "You will be purified, and your "ka" purified, with the water of life." There is a small corridor that leads to the second and last room. The walls of the corridor are inscribed with a dedicatory formula to the goddess Renenutet. Very interestingly, just inside this inner chamber, on both sides of the doorway, is another dedicatory inscription to the goddess Renenutet, though here, for reasons rather unknown, the name of Amenemhat inside the cartouche has been defaced⁵ .

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Although, the reliefs in the first hall are not well preserved, but they include a scene showing a king and the goddess Seshat, founding the temple. Behind the entrance room there follows another one, that is also all around decorated with reliefs. On the South side there is a scene showing Amenemhat III in front of Renenutet. The latter is depicted as standing women with a snake head⁵ . Between both is shown in a much smaller scale the king's daughter Neferuptah. At the back of this room, on the North side, there are the three chapels. The first one, on the West side (left), is dedicated to Renenutet. She appears as the main deity at the back of the chapel. On the side walls are shown on the west side Sobek, and on the East side Renenutet. The chapel contains a scene depicting the pharaoh offering unguent molded into a conical shape to the goddess Renenutet. In this rendition of Renenutet, one can clearly see her serpent's head. Far from appearing grotesque, the image is quite graceful with the cobra hood adorning her shoulders like a coiffure. On the opposing wall is a scene of him making offerings to Sobek. Similar offering scenes adorn the walls of the other niches, which were meant to hold statue groups representing Renenutet flanked by the two kings. The second chapel was dedicated to Renenutet and Sobek. Renenutet appears on the West wall and on the back, north, wall, standing behind king Amenemhat III. The king is standing in front of Sobek, who also

⁵ T.A.H. Wilkinson: *Early Dynastic Egypt*. Routledge, London 2002, p. 256.

⁵ Günter Dreyer: *Horus Kroködil, ein Gegenkönig der Dynastie 0*. In: Renee Friedman and Barbara Adams (Hrsg.): *The Followers of Horus, Studies dedicated to Michael Allen Hoffman, 1949–1990 Egyptian Studies Association Publication*, vol. 2, Bloomington 1992, p. 259-263.



appears on the East wall in front of the same king. On the east wall appears Sobek again. Indeed, in the largest, center niche are the remains of such a group. Notably, the probable wife of Amenemhet III and mother of Amenemhet IV, Hetepi, is so far only known from this temple⁵. The last chapel was again mainly dedicated to Renenutet. She appears on the west and on the back wall in front of Amenemhat III, while on the East wall Sobek is standing in front of a king. Today, the temple is open to the public where visitors can see its rows of sphinxes and lions and crocodile pools as well as depictions of Sobek with his head of a crocodile and man's body⁵. The Ptolemaic parts of the temple comprise a paved processional way passing through an eight-columned kiosk leading to a portico and transverse vestibule⁵.

Temple B, Greek Temple, Temple of Isis Thermouthis.

Temple B was built at the back of temple A with the main entrance facing to the North. The remains of this temple that is dedicated to Isis Hermouthis, the Greek version of Renenutet was unearthed during the first season of excavation⁵, pilasters incorporated into the temple structure were inscribed with Greek hymns to this goddess. However, one line in one of the hymns also referred to an earlier Middle Kingdom temple on the site dedicated by Amenemhet III. The plan of this building is similar to that of temple A. There is an open broad courtyard at the front. There follows a hall and at the back there are three chapels. The central chapel has a niche at the back. The temple was dedicated to Isis-Thermouthis⁵. The temple's decoration is unfinished. There are some figures carved as reliefs on the temple walls. Two badly preserved figures flanking the entrance.

⁵ E. Bresciani, A. Radwan, A. Giammarusti, H. el-Leithy: *Medinet Madi, Archaeological Guide*, Verona 2010, 44-47

⁵ *ibid*, URL: <http://www.historyonthenet.com/medinet-madi-temple-1505/>

⁵ It has been suggested that the unusually good preservation of this temple complex, excavated by a team of archaeologists from the University of Milan in the 1930s, may have been due simply to its relative seclusion.

⁵ Excavations held under the Milan team directed by A. Vogliano.

⁵ Thermouthis is the Greek name for Renenutet.



On the left side of the facade was carved a sitting figure that was never finished⁶ .

Temple C. Temple of the Crocodile god Sobek:

A small well preserved Ptolemaic temple that lies back to back with the Middle_Kingdom temple is its more modern counterpart. It was probably Ptolemy IX Soter II who added the two courtyards that lead to the central chapel containing an altar and flanking it are two smaller chapels. Temple C was so called by the excavators. It was dedicated to the cult of two crocodile mummies. The temple complex was excavated from 1995 to 1999. The temple lies east of the Renenutet temple with the main entrance facing the latter temple complex.

Here, we find stone doorways and lintels. The walls are still up to four meters high. The Greek inscriptions are badly worn and for the most part unreadable. The best preserved relief is found on the outer left wall as one enters the interior courtyard. Here, a delightful, grinning Sobek is depicted with a frightful set of teeth. This second temple was built of mud brick with stone doorways and lintels, with its axis at right-angles to the older temple. The Ptolemaic expansion of the temple included the processional way to the south with its lions and sphinxes which passed through a columned kiosk which eventually leads to the older two columned porticos. A kiosk with eight columns once existed along the processional route. It was dedicated to the Crocodile God (Sobek) and connected to a nursery in which the eggs of the sacred crocodiles were hatched⁶ .

The temple proper consists of a small courtyard with a chapel behind it. The chapel contains two naoi. In each of them was found the mummy of a crocodile. In front of the temple is a bigger courtyard and there are on both sides buildings. They were perhaps for economical use. North of the temple was excavated a vaulted chamber. The interior is divided into two parts by a stone wall. Attached to the wall there is a basin. In the basin

⁶ R. H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Temples of Ancient Egypt*, Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2000. P. 120

⁶ R. Naumann, "Der Tempel des Mittleren Reiches in Medinet Madi", *MDAIK* 8 , 1939, 185–189



were found more than thirty crocodile eggs. This might indicate that this vaulted room was once a nursery for crocodiles⁶. The temple complex was in use till the Fourth century AD and then abandoned. The year 2007 marked new discoveries east of the archaeological area: the remains of the castrum Narmoutheos, built during Diocletian's rule, and an important hydraulic system. In 2008⁶ an ancient south access was discovered, which begins with a large altar that is made of limestone blocks and is aligned with both the processional way and dromos and with the entire sacred precinct⁶.

Coptic Texts:

Tablets and papyri were also found in the debris, including an important oracular document written in demotic script. Apparently, in 1928-1930⁶, a number of texts of some importance, known as A Manichaean Psalm-Book, Part II⁶, were also discovered⁶ in this general location by Carl Schmidt which is thought to date from about 340 AD.

The Italian excavators recently excavated a vaulted structure on the north side of the new temple, but the remains are poorly preserved. On the north side of the temple court, a crocodile nursery was discovered with dozens of eggs in different stages of maturation.

⁶ R. Naumann, "Der Tempel des Mittleren Reiches in Medinet Madi", *MDAIK* 8, 1939, 185-189.

⁶ The ISSEM Project, excavated this area.

⁶ E. Bresciani, A. Radwan, A. Giammarusti, H. el-Leithy: *Medinet Madi, Archaeological Guide*, Verona 2010, 44-47

⁶ C. R. C., Allberry, *Coptic Manichaean Psalm-book part II*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1938, p. 203-227.

⁶ The Psalms of Thomas (more correctly "Psalms of Thom") are an enigmatic set of psalms found appended to the end of the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-book, which was in turn part of the Medinet Madi Coptic Texts uncovered in 1928. Published in 1938 by C. R. C. Allberry, Internet versions only comprise 12 numbered psalms. The themes and content of the psalms bear a considerable resemblance to the Hymn of the Pearl from the Acts of Thomas. In 1949 Torgny Save-Soderbergh suggested that the psalms were largely based upon canonical Mandaean texts (despite Jesus being mentioned positively in two psalms), his work on the psalms demonstrating that Mandaeanism did not derive from Manichaeism, as was formerly commonly believed.



The Italian team, which is working to construct a three dimensional model of the monuments in the area in order to explore the chronological development of the site from the Middle_Kingdom through the Greek and Roman periods, has also uncovered a large Roman town and ten Christian churches of the sixth and seventh century, indicating that the site saw activity perhaps well at least through Roman times⁶ .

7

It is not clear what happened to spell the end of ancient Medinet Madi. It seems to have simply been abandoned, even though it clearly had a presence up into the Christian era and beyond. A medieval romance poem known as the "Story of Abu Zayd", which was often told in coffee shops throughout the Middle East even outside of Egypt, relates that Medinet Madi was destroyed by a popular semi-fictional war hero named Abu Zeid⁶ .

Conclusion and Recommendations:

It is likely that the typical tourist to Egypt will not, on their first visit, tour the Fayoum region, except for those interested in nature, or fossils, perhaps they should. However, for the antiquities enthusiast, there is simply too many other, perhaps somewhat more convenient sights to see. The Fayoum generally and Madinet Madi in particular are not well promoted by tour operators and not listed in most of the tourism maps, although many important historical monuments, that date from various eras, like the Middle Kingdom times, the Graeco-Roman Period, the Ptolemaic era and the Coptic era, occurred. This may refer to several obstacles that face tourism companies; some of them are environmental as the sandy winds, the very hot weather especially in summer and the ruggedness of the archaeological site. On the other hand, the site is not

⁶ C. R. C., Allberry, *Coptic M̄nichaean Psalm-book part II*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1938, p. 203-227.

⁶ It is said that he led his tribes from the desert of Nejd through Egypt on his way to Tunisia in the eleventh century AD. On their way, they passed through the ancient town located at Medinet Madi and asked the ruler, King Madi, for food and shelter. Unfortunately for Madi, he refused, so Abu Zed razed the town, killed the king and all of his subjects, and took what food and shelter he needed.



easily accessible the area is considered rural area with very poor services and very poor community, unpaved roads, the bad situation of the monuments that increase every year due to lack of restoration as well as not being considered in the tourism lists like Wadi el Rayan and finally the visitor centre is rarely opened.

To overcome the difficulties facing the historical site the following recommendations should be considered, an integral cultural heritage protection system should be applied by Ministry of Antiquities, Ministry of Tourism and Al Fayoum Governorate. A conservation project and restoration activities should be suggested, as well as preparing the site for all types of visits. Inventories of different categories of cultural heritage assets in the area providing harmonized comparable and usable information on heritage and its importance should be announced. Orientation of the site should be held in different ways. Finally, the site has to be scheduled in the Tourism maps.

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الملخص العربي

اعادة احياء مدينة ماضي

تعتبر مدينة الفيوم من اكثر المدن التي تحتوى على العديد من الاثار التي ترجع لمختلف العصور التاريخيه مثل العصر الفرعوني والعصر اليونانى الرومانى وكذلك العصر القبطى وعلى الرغم من وجود كل هذه الاثار بتلك المدينه الا انها لا تحظى بالمكانه اللائقه بكل ما تحتويه. من اهم الاماكن الاثريه الموجوده بمحافظة الفيوم مدينة ماضى والتي تعد البوابه الجنوبيه الغربيه للمحافظة والتي تبعد عن وادى الريان بحوالى ٢٨ كم. وتحتوى مدينة ماضى على ثلاث من المعابد والتي تم البدء فى اكتشافهم حوالى عام ١٩١٠. ويرجع تاريخ تلك المعابد للدولة الوسطى، العصر اليونانى والعصر البطلمى. هذا بالاضافه لبعض الاثار التي ترجع للعصر الرومانى والعصر القبطى. وعلى الرغم من اهمية تلك المعابد وخاصتا ذلك الذى يرجع للدولة الوسطى حيث يعد الوحيد الموجود الذى يرجع لتلك الفتره الا ان معابد مدينة ماضى لا تحظى بالاهتمام الكافى. وتتناول هذه الدراسه اهمية منطقة مدينة ماضى وما تحظى به من اثار ثم يتم الاشاره لاهم المعوقات فى تلك المنطقه وكيفية التغلب عليها.