

A Revival of the Site of Abousir (*Taposiris Magna*)

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1-Introduction:

A place located in the Northern Delta of Egypt, it contains a lot of archaeological sites. It lies on the Mediterranean coast, about 45 km to the west of Alexandria on its western road. It passes between Lake Mariout and the sea. Abousir , which was named in ancient time *Taposiris Magna* is the town of Abu Sir today.

2- Problem Formulation

Before we go to its history and monuments, it must be noted that the aim of this article is as follows:-

- 1- The revival of this site in order to be a tourist one as it lies not far from the sea.
- 2- It has an archeological view as it represents different periods of history and has a unique character.
- 3- It contains a sample of one of the seven miracle of ancient world " Pharos of Alexandria ".
- 4- From the healthy point, it has an old reputation , which came back to Saint Menas and his miracles about hospitalization of patients (34 Km. from Marimina).
- 5- Reorganizing this area to be one of the most attractive and interesting sites for different kind of people.
- 6- The revival of the site will influenced the northern coast and will change the economic activities there.
- 7- Many foreigner missions still work there till now.

A) Abousir

Under the Persian Rule of Egypt, the town, have been inhabited since Pre-dynastic times, and became the capital of the petty kingdom of Marea. This name was derived from the ancient Lake Mareotis, which extended to the south-east in what was at the time, fertile ground, in an area famous for its wine. Most of the remains of Taposiris Magna today, date to the Graeco-Roman Period.

The site of Taposiris Magna has been excavated by a Hungarian team directed by *Gyozo Voros* between 1998 and 2001. Recent finds include gold coins and a gold bracelet dating to the Byzantine Period (4th century AD). A well preserved black granite bust of the goddess Isis, depicted in the Greek style with a wig of curls had also been found in the temple's area. The site which had previously been somewhat neglected, but it is now undergoing preservation by the Supreme Council of Antiquities. Despite this, it still needs a lot of works to do in order to be a complete revival to this site, and make of it a New Greek Acropolis according to its ancient importance.

This site was used as a fortress during the Arab invasion of Egypt, then as a quarantine station and part of the coastal caravan route. Nearby remains

Taposiris Magna was an important town during the Ptolemaic Period, also it was considered one of a series of Graeco-Roman sites on the north coast. Taposiris Magna had a harbor with a sea wall and quays.

include the city of Philoxenite, which was founded on the southern side of Lake Mareotis, to the south-east of Abu Sir. Consequently, the site is large, impressive and dates to the fifth and sixth centuries AD. This area is not to be confused with the pyramid field named Abousir near Saqqara



Figure 1 : A view of Abousir.

B-The Temple of Taposiris Magna

The most important monument within the town was a temple enclosed within limestone walls, 84 M². The walls, although now in ruins, still stand about 10 m. high in some parts, with recesses. A stone pylon was built into the eastern side.

The temple was mostly destroyed when a Christian church was built in the courtyard during the Byzantine era.

The temple, we used to call Taposiris Magna, probably dates from the same period. It must be considered that most of other structures in the Delta during this period were made of mud-brick, but the pylons remained from the temple.

This temple was dedicated to the god Osiris. There is evidence to prove that, sacred animals were worshipped there. Archeologists found an animal necropolis near the temple. There are also some remains of a Christian church, which show that the temple was used as a church in later centuries. Also it was found in the same area, remains of public baths built by the emperor Justinian, as well as a seawall, quays and a bridge.

Near the beach side of the area, we can also see the remains of a tower built by Ptolemy II " Philadelphus ". This tower was an exact scale replica of the destroyed Alexandrine Pharos Lighthouse.

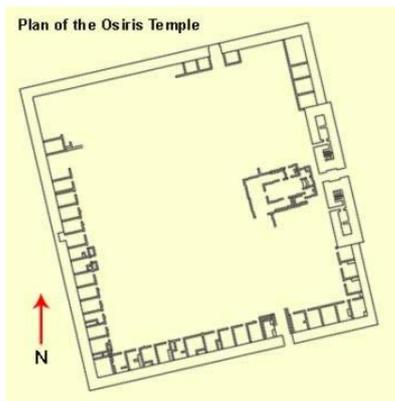


Figure 2 : Plan of Osiris Temple



Figure 3: Temple of Osiris.

C-The Tower

A 17 M. tall tower nearby still remains in the site, built by Ptolemy II Philadelphos as a one-tenth size replica of the Pharos of Alexandria. The tower was actually a funerary monument.

The structure reveals three stores, the first one was square, the second octagonal and the third store was cylindrical. It has now been reconstructed with a wooden staircase up to the summit.



Figure 4 : Abousir Tower

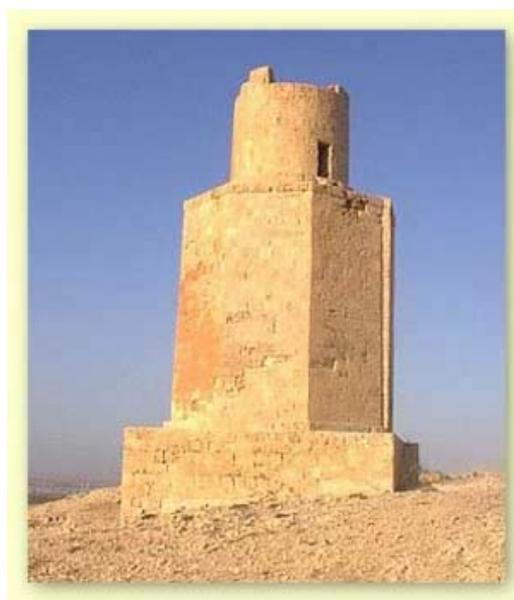


Figure 5: Abousir Tower.

d) Lake Mariout

(Mariout, Maryut, Mareotis) is just formed the southern border of Alexandria. Along the shore are reed-beds where fishermen, as in ancient times, move about in flat-bottomed boats



Figure 6 : Lake Mariout

propelled by long poles. As in the Nile Valley, where much farming continued to be carried on in almost the same way as in ancient times, here, fishermen also carried on mostly following in their ancestor's footsteps.

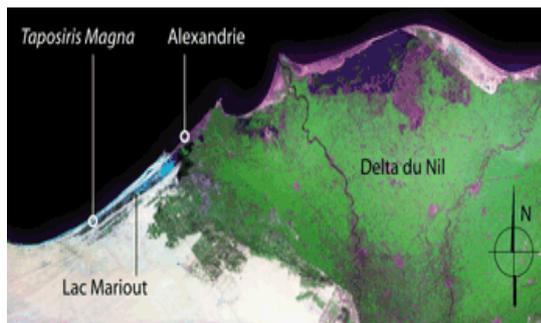


Figure 7: Lake Mariout and Taposiris Magna.

E) Abu Mena

Abu Mena (also Abu Mina) was a town, monastery complex and Christian pilgrimage center in Late Antique of Egypt in a 6th-century, about 45 km southwest of Alexandria. Its remains were designated a " World Heritage Site " in 1979. There were also very few standing remains, but the foundations of most major buildings, such as the great basilica, were easily discernable. Recent agricultural efforts in the area have led to a significant rise

in the water table, which has caused a number of the site's buildings to collapse or became unstable.

Conclusion:

Therefore, the site was added to the list of threatened World Heritage Sites in 2001. We would like to add that an animation presentation will show precisely all the needed details around the project of the revival of this site. This place contained the history , the legend, the archaeology and tourism , it just needs some focus on it.



Figure 8 : Abu Mina site



Figure 9: Saint Mina .

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Key words : Abousir – Saint Mina – Temple – Taposiris Magna – basilica – baths .

Hoping that our paper will obtain your approval , looking forward to hear from you.

Thank you.

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