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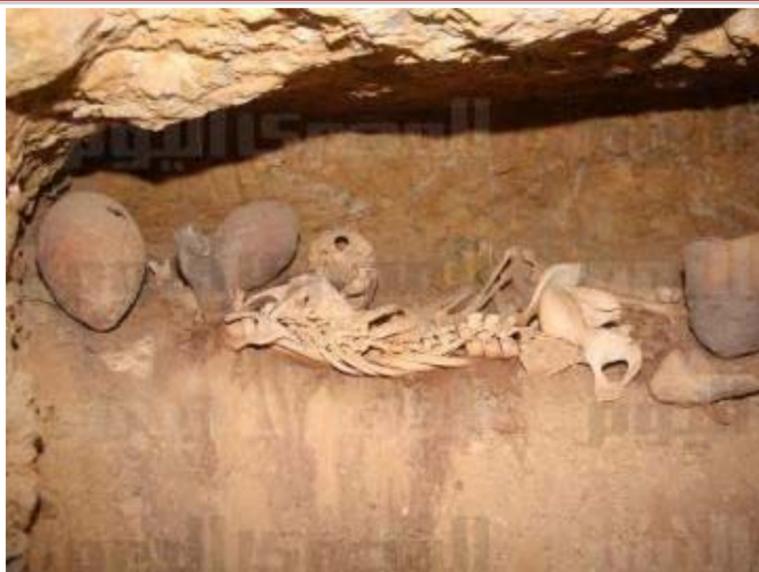


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Antinopolis archaeological site being 'destroyed systematically'

On Sat, 09/03/2013 - 19:07



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Ahmed Zaki Osman

An Egyptian independent archaeologist has warned on Friday that Antinopolis, one of the country's largest archaeological sites located in Minya, is being "destroyed systematically" by residents amid a complete failure from the government to protect the site.

Monica Hanna, a researcher with the University of Humboldt in Berlin, told Egypt Independent that she received information from archaeologists who work at the site of the ancient Roman Antinopolis, also known as Sheikh Abada, saying the site faces grave danger.

Hanna said that some of the damages occurred to the site, saying that the area near the Ramses II temple has been bulldozed and leveled. She added that the northwestern corner of the walled city has been bulldozed and for agricultural use.

The case of Antinopolis was brought to light last December when some media outlets reported that the site was witnessing fierce excavation and demolition campaigns in an attempt to reclaim the land for agricultural use.

Some residents reportedly demolished a large area of archaeological ruins and cemeteries made of mud in the Roman cemetery and prepared the area for planting after looting the site.

Hanna, however, told Egypt Independent in a phone call that the situation is getting worse, similar to what has happened to the archaeological site of Dahshur. In January, residents began digging a cemetery on a piece of land in the vicinity of the Temple Valley in Dahshur, an area that has been a UNESCO world heritage site since 1994.

"There is a systematic construction of cemeteries on archaeological sites and the scenario is repeated everywhere," she said, adding that neither the state nor the police are protecting such areas.

She also said that the construction of cemeteries is often a cover to dig up antiquities.

"We are losing the archaeological sites forever. If a home is built, the state can later remove it and retrieve the land. But once the dead are buried, it is impossible to do so," explained Hanna.

Hanna launched a hash tag #Save_antinopolis in order to shed light on the crisis facing the important archaeological site.

Moreover, she said that Ministry of Antiquities has been unable to confront the destruction of Antinopolis, which includes archeological finds dating from the pre-dynastic period, the Middle and Modern Kingdoms, and the Ptolemaic period.

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The site became famous during the Roman era after Emperor Hadrian established a huge Roman-style city named Antonio Polis, filling it with theaters, temples, schools and other historical buildings. Many of the buildings were still standing during the French invasion of Egypt in the late 18th century, and scholars later wrote about it in the book "Description de l'Égypte."

The city flourished after the age of Hadrian until the Antinoë region became one of the largest regions of Egypt and included most of Upper Egypt, starting from the South of Fayoum until Sohag, with Antinopolis as its capital, which is now called Sheikh Abada.

The importance of the region continued during the Byzantine era. By the spread of Christianity, the city became home to a large diocese. It also remained important during the Islamic eras, as its name became Ansená.

Last year, archaeologists at the site announced that they had located a Roman cemetery dating at least as early as the mid-second to mid-third century CE.

Attacks against Egypt's historical sites began during the 18-day uprising against former President Hosni Mubarak, when some managed to get into the Egyptian museum in Tahrir Square. Later, with the security vacuum around the country, many more archaeological sites were looted or vandalized.

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ancient Egyptian history, Antinopolis, archaeological site looting, Dahshour, Egyptian archaeology

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Does this mean that you consider the rest of the world, including your own fellow Egyptians, uncivilized?

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Americans YES,..... But not the rest of the world...including EGYPTIANS.....

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Tiffany Rawlings · Visiting Assistant Professor at SUNY Brockport

How do you expect to garner support from "civilized people of the world" when you lambaste Americans. I am a professor of archeology and physical anthropology AND an American, and am quite fed up with the notion that all Americans are ignorant and uncivilized. You are doing your cause a disservice. I am horrified that these sites are being destroyed and will be forwarding this article to all of my colleagues. The destruction of these sites must stop.

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Rajpal Saharan · A. Professor at K.u.kurukshetra

the phenomena of demolishing and damaging the sites prevailed in less developed countries from egypt to India. people do not know the importance of the deep antiquity of the sites.

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