

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

**Jermien Hussein Abd El-Kafy  
Tourism Studies, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management,  
Helwan University**

### **Abstract**

Despite the fact that Egypt owns a huge fortune of Coptic heritage sites (i.e. The Monastery of Saint Anthony, El Bagawat Necropolis, the Red Monastery and the White Monastery, etc.), heritage tourism in Egypt is known only by Pharaonic monuments. Accordingly, it is necessary to focus on the Egyptian Coptic heritage. The current paper aims at shedding light on the importance of the Egyptian Coptic heritage as a main component of the Egyptian heritage tourism as well as exploring the different challenges facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region. Within this context, interviews were conducted with key representatives of Coptic heritage experts. It was concluded that different challenges are facing Coptic heritage in Egypt such as: there is no department of Coptology in the Egyptian universities; Coptic conservators are quite rare in Egypt; Mismanagement of Coptic heritage sites endanger them as well as Lack of security measures worsened the situation.

**Key words:** Heritage tourism - Coptic heritage - Wadi Feiran - Challenges Facing Egyptian Coptic Heritage – Heritage conservation

### **1- Introduction**

Egypt's heritage varies from Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic and Islamic. Coptic heritage is considered one of the most important Egyptian heritage components. Coptic heritage includes all life fields; it represents people's entity and identity. Coptic heritage is not limited to architectural heritage, but it includes Coptic music, Coptic language, Coptic calendar, Coptic literature, Coptic folklore....etc..

On the other hand, there are many challenges facing Coptic heritage tourism in Egypt as these Coptic monuments have been neglected for long time. Moreover, lack of good exhibitions, promotion, distinguished marketing processes as well as recent huge buildings hide the characteristic tourist monumental pattern.

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

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So it is necessary to focus on the Egyptian Coptic heritage. In order to achieve some progress in this field certain activities should be put into considerations: Developing Coptic areas by providing them with main services and facilities such as roads' pavements and lighting as well as means of transportation and executing more marketing campaigns in different tourist markets to attract new segments to Egypt.

This paper aims at highlighting the significance of the Egyptian Coptic heritage as a main component of the Egyptian heritage tourism, evaluating the current situation of the Egyptian Coptic heritage regarding technical, managerial, traditional, social and financial issues, exploring the different challenges facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region and suggesting recommendations that would enhance tourist visits to the Egyptian Coptic heritage sites. In an attempt to achieve the afore-mentioned aim, a qualitative research methodology was adopted where two phases of data collection were employed. In the first phase, data on the issue under investigation was collected from various secondary data sources. In the second phase, qualitative data was gathered through undergoing ten extended unstructured in-depth interviews with key representatives of Coptic heritage experts and they are Director of Coptic Studies Center, General Director of monuments' restoration in Cairo Museums, General Director of the Islamic and Coptic Monuments in Upper Egypt area, a lawyer and a certified international arbitrator, PhD in intellectual property and a member of the Egyptian Society for the International Law, Director of Islamic monuments restoration Department in Sohag , General Director of research and archaeological studies in Sinai, Priest of St. George Church, an Archaeological researcher and architect, General Director of monuments' restoration and Museums in the canal and Sinai and the Secretary of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate in Egypt.

## **2- Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt**

### **2.1- Definitions of Heritage:**

Heritage is a broad term (Shepherd and Yu, 2013); it varies according to the kind of heritage described whether tangible heritage such as buildings, monuments and memorials, or intangible heritage such as folk songs, festivals and languages. As such, the term heritage encompasses a range of things from large to small, grandiose to humble, natural to constructed. It can be used to describe everything from large landscapes to tiny fragments of bone, stone and charcoal in archeological sites; grand places to ordinary dwelling places; wilderness areas to modern city landscapes (Harrison, 2013).

Moreover, the term heritage is frequently associated with the word inheritance, which means something transferred from one generation to another. It also acts as a carrier of historical values from the past. Besides, it is considered an integral part of the cultural identity of any society (Sigala and Leslie, 2006).

Heritage could also be defined as "aesthetically pleasing material objects (*i.e.* sites, places and/ or landscapes) that are non-renewable. Their fragility requires that current generations must care for, protect and venerate these things so that they may be inherited by the future". This protection can only be achieved under the stewardship of particular forms of expertise (Smith, 2012).

Furthermore, heritage may be described as "our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations, and which can be expressed in many different forms (Swenson, 2013), both tangible (monuments, landscapes, existing structures, modified facilities, purpose-built attractions, etc.) and intangible (languages, the performing arts, music, traditions, customs, stories, manifestations of past, cultural practices, collective knowledge, etc.)" (Buhalis and Costa, 2006).

Heritage may be classified into two main types: cultural heritage (is the past created by humankind and its various manifestations) and natural heritage ( includes naturally- occurring phenomena such as canyons, rain forests, lakes, rivers, glaciers, mountains, deserts and coastlines) (Timothy, 2011).

In that respect, cultural heritage is represented in:

(a) Monuments (*i.e.* architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science) (UNESCO *et al.*, 2013). (b) Groups of buildings (*i.e.* groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science) (Jackson, 2012) and (c) Sites (*i.e.* works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view) (Canuti *et al.*, 2009).

On the other hand, natural heritage is represented in each of: Natural features (*i.e.* physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

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of view) (UNESCO *et al.*, 2010), and Geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas (*i.e.* the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value (Office of the Federal Register, 2012) from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty) (Worthing and Bond, 2008).

### **2.2- Definitions of Heritage Tourism:**

Heritage tourism is a combination between the heritage assets and cultural assets of the tourism industry where the former are primarily focused on the remaining of past generations, while the latter are focused on the life styles of the host communities in the past times as well as in the present ones (Faulkner *et al.*, 2001). The relationship between heritage and tourism often results in reinterpretation of heritage; tourism and heritage have become linked together as tourism is used as an economic justification for heritage preservation, while heritage has a highly beneficial impact on tourism, as it is an additional asset for the cultural and economic appeal of the nation.

In other words, heritage tourism is a broad field of specialty travel, based on nostalgia for the past and the desire to experience diverse cultural landscapes and forms (Muka and Cinaj, 2015). Besides, it is believed to be “centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery” (Furlan and Gambarotto, 2012).

So it is concerned with exploring both tangible and intangible vestiges of the past (Park, 2013) which means traveling to experience the special character of a certain place (US Department of Commerce, 2013).

### **2.3- Definitions of the Term Copt:**

The term Copt and the objective Coptic are designations derived from qibt, are the Arabic transcription of the Greek term for the indigenous population of Egypt. Also the term Coptic was applied as if it was the synonym of Christian. Initially, the word described a non-Arabic-speaking, non-Muslim. By implication, a Copt was also Christian, since Christianity was the predominant religion of the land at the time of the Arab conquest in AD 641 (Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, 2007).

The word Copt probably originates from the ancient Egyptian word Hwt-Ka-Ptah which means the “House of the Companion of Ptah” (Coptic Culture, 2014). While the Greeks used the word Aigyptios for Egypt, the Copts used the Coptic term Kyptos (Farag, 2014). During the early centuries of Islam, the Arabs referred to Egypt as Dar al-Qibt, the Abode of the Copts (Thompson, 2008).

## **2.4- The Concept of Coptic Heritage:**

Coptic heritage is derived from cultural heritage; it could be classified into: (a) tangible Coptic Heritage (*i.e.* churches, monasteries, fixed or movable monuments....etc.) and (b) intangible Coptic Heritage (*i.e.* customs, traditions, ceremonies, songs, language, costume, crafts, dances, rituals, music, literature, legends....etc.). Thus Coptic Heritage represents all the material and spiritual legacies left by Christian civilization (Saied, 2014).

Remnants of the Coptic era are evident throughout Egypt; the worthy archaeological sites include churches, monasteries, old schools.....etc.

## **2.5- Examples of Coptic Heritage Sites in Egypt:**

There are many important sites date back to the Early Coptic period in Egypt but unfortunately they are suffering from neglect and lack of effective security measures (Coptic Studies Hold Key to Legacy, 2003). These include: The Monastery of Saint Anthony, one of the oldest monasteries in the world, is a Coptic Orthodox monastery standing in an oasis in the Eastern Desert of Egypt, in the southern part of the Suez Governorate;

El Bagawat Necropolis is one of the earliest and best preserved Christian cemeteries in the world, located near the Kharga Oasis, with its painted private tomb-chapels, considered to be the oldest and largest Christian cemetery in the world;

Wadi el Natrun the site of an important early Christian monastic tradition, with four functioning monasteries surviving today, and located in the desert edge of the Eastern Delta (and recently put forward to UNESCO for consideration);

Kellia, one of the three early Christian monastic centers, located in north east of Wadi el-Natrun, which demonstrated the 'bridge' between the ascetic (lone) monks and the cenobitic (communal) (Middleton, 2012);

The Red Monastery and the White Monastery are also among the best preserved examples of Christian monasteries located in Upper Egypt in the vicinity of Souhag.

## **3- Wadi Feiran as a case study of the Egyptian Coptic Heritage Sites**

### **3.1- The Significance of the Site:**

Egypt was ratified to the World Heritage Convention on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1974. Currently, there are seven Egyptian sites listed as World Heritage Sites.

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

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On top of that, Egypt submitted thirty two new sites which are listed in the World Heritage Tentative List (Egypt, 2014). Wadi Feiran was submitted by the Egyptian Antiquities Organization on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1994 as a Cultural property (Wadi Feiran, 2014).

Wadi Feiran is not only one of the longest valleys in Sinai as it extends from the Suez Gulf to Saint Catherine Monastery, but also one of the most historically renowned valleys. It's full of Biblical monuments and sites. It starts from the high mountains surrounding the Monastery of St Catherine at 2500m or so above sea level, then it descends steeply to the north, and then turns to the west until it terminates in the Suez Gulf about 165km south of the coast (Zahran and Willis, 2008).

Wadi Feiran is known as the "Pearl of Sinai" due to its spectacular palm trees and is also known as the "Site of Rephidim".

### **3.2- History:**

Feiran is an extensive site built at an oasis in Wadi Feiran. An already well-established Christian community is attested there in the late fourth/early fifth century, when the appointment of a bishop to Feiran is recorded. Monasteries are known there by the early fifth century, while there are frequent references to ascetic monks living in cells near Feiran, and indeed throughout Wadi Feiran. Later authors referred to the presence of at least 2000 monastic cells in the region. Feiran was a major Christian center in Sinai, and its bishop, at least in the sixth century, exerted authority over all monks in the region. The ruins of Feiran show it to have been an extensive walled settlement built on a hill, supporting thousands of inhabitants. In addition to the monasteries there and the many solitary monks, Feiran contained at least five churches, including one that seems to have been of considerable antiquity. Some of these churches were relatively small, but the Bishop's Church and the Church of Saints Cosmas and Damian had been impressive landmarks there. Most of the monasteries and churches of Feiran were ruined by the sixteenth century. Ruins of some of the churches and monasteries at Feiran are still visible to visitors, and the site is most easily accessible on the way to the Monastery of St Catherine (Bagnall and Rathbone, 2004).

### **3.3- Location:**

Wadi Feiran is located at south of Sinai. Historically, it dates back to the fourth century AD.

### **3.4- Site's Description:**

Wadi Feiran is distinguished by its natural sceneries. Among these is the Oasis of Feiran, the largest oasis in Sinai. Along the edges of the oasis and the Wadi are the dramatic, often sheer cliffs of the Wadi wall, which contribute to the valley's secretive atmosphere.

Wadi Feiran is divided into different areas identified as follows:

(a) Deir el Banat is Wadi Feiran largest oasis in Sinai, which contains many early Christian hermitages and churches. Small structure on mountain top known as Deir el-Banat, may have been a Roman military place, rather than a Christian building.

(b) El-Mahrad Monastery Area includes several Christian churches and tombs. Later several Christian churches in area and cave tombs in slopes of Gebel Tahouna were found. Ancient town was abandoned by the thirteenth century BC.. Many Nabataean tombs and inscriptions were found in the area likewise. A small working convent is still there. It is a dependency of St. Catherine's Monastery. The site was excavated in recent years by a German/Egyptian expedition.

(c) Gabal Al-Tahuna (mountain of the mill, in Arabic). Upon this mountain, there is a number of small churches, cells, and tombs of hermits and monks. They are placed under the authority of the Ministry of Antiquities. Such potentials give the site the right to be enlisted as a World Heritage Site (Gohary and Gohary, 2004).

## **4- Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage at Wadi Feiran Region**

Different challenges facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran, these could be discussed as follows:

### **4.1- Technical Challenges:**

Technical challenges could be classified in inspection, documentation and conservation activities. As for the inspection activities; inspectors of antiquities, are not totally specialized in Coptic heritage, they have mainly studied Egyptology or Greco-Roman Archeology or Islamic Archeology, in addition to some Coptic subjects related to their specialization. On the other hand, the inspectors of Antiquities of the Islamic and Coptic Department, who are responsible for the Coptic monuments, cannot read the Coptic script. Also the excavations of the Supreme Council of Antiquities at Coptic sites are carried out under their supervision. Finally, there is a deficiency in researchers' linguistic skills necessary to interpret Egyptian Coptic contexts.

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

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Regarding documentation activities; Coptic monuments which might be found within an ancient Egyptian site are the responsibility of Egyptologists, while their knowledge of Coptic archeology, art and architecture is very limited. There are considerable number of scholars of Egyptology, of the Greco-Roman civilization and of the Islamic art and architecture in Egyptian universities and in the Supreme Council of Antiquities who publish the discovered materials related to these cultures (Gabra, 2004). Unfortunately, this is not the case for Coptology, and consequently Coptic discoveries are often neglected. Many Coptic monuments were found during the excavations and were not well documented. In some excavations, the finds were stored and then stolen (Gabra, 2004).

Finally concerning conservation activities; inspectors of antiquities have carried out excavations at several Coptic sites and in many cases did not even publish a preliminary report of their work about the circumstances of their discovery (Coptic Studies Hold Key to Legacy, 2003). As most of the Coptic buildings were built of mud-bricks, the main art form in the Coptic monasteries was wall painting. Murals were applied to mud-brick plastered walls. Therefore, the paintings are often fragile. Accordingly, the conservation of such mural paintings requires trained conservators of a very high level; otherwise the beautiful paintings will fall down and turn to powder. Unfortunately good conservators of Coptic wall paintings are very rare in Egypt (Coptic Studies Hold Key to Legacy, 2003). The pillaging, demolition, rebuilding, and restoration of Coptic monasteries and churches over the centuries resulted in considerable losses. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, archaeological sites with Coptic remains were endangered not only by illegal digging and treasure hunting, but also by professional archaeologists. They cleared monastic relics, churches, and houses without documentation, in order to uncover the great buildings of Pharaonic Egypt (Gabra and Eaton-Krauss, 2007).

### **4.2- Managerial Challenges:**

Regarding managerial challenges; protection and conservation activities are not frequently considered in Coptic heritage sites. Localities do not pay any attention towards involving local citizens in managing Wadi Firan Region. Insufficient and unqualified tourist services and facilities form a major hindrance while the multiplicity of laws applicable to Coptic heritage makes things worse. Lack of coordination and cooperation between the various authorities interested in Coptic heritage intensify the problem. The spread of Coptic heritage in Egyptian deserts also leads to accessibilities

difficulties to the area represented in (inappropriate roads and inadequate means of transportation as well as insufficient security measures all along these roads). Furthermore, there is unjustified absence of Coptic departments at Egyptian universities.

#### **4.3- Traditional, Social and Financial Challenges:**

Concerning traditional challenges; they are represented in religious and tribal restrictions that must be respected. Besides, many monks keep manuscripts and artifacts in churches or monasteries, exposing them to damage or theft. Interest in Coptic heritage is the responsibility of churches and monasteries, as it is only a private religious heritage of a particular category. In terms of social challenges, there is a lack of awareness of the value of these Coptic heritage sites, which leads to problems arising from misunderstanding between monks and officials. In addition to lack of citizens' tourist awareness which negatively affects their behavior and attitude towards tourism. Finally in regard to financial challenges it could be noted that the budget directed to both excavation and restoration activities is quite insufficient (Gabra, 2004). Inspectors have insufficient budget for expenses, even such small things as a snapshot camera, black and white film, a meter, and paper and pencils are not available (Coptic Studies Hold Key to Legacy, 2003).

#### **5. Research Findings**

The key results and discussion of findings from the interviews are analyzed in this section. Questionnaire has been divided into three key areas: 1- Significance of the Egyptian Coptic heritage. 2- Challenges facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region. 3- Cooperation between the national and international authorities to enhance the situation of Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region.

# Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region

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## Part One Significance of the Egyptian Coptic heritage

### 1/1- Components of Coptic heritage:

Table (1): Components of Coptic heritage\*

Coptic heritage	Frequency	Percentage
Churches	10	100%
Monasteries	10	100%
Fixed or movable monuments	9	90%
Customs, traditions & ceremonies	8	80%
Singing, language & costume	9	90%
Crafts, dance & ritual	5	50%
Music, literature & legends	7	70%

\* More than one answer is valid

From the previous table it is apparent that all experts which formed the sample mentioned that churches and monasteries are the most important components of Coptic heritage, (90%) of the sample indicated to fixed or movable monuments and singing, language and costume, (80%) said that customs, traditions and ceremonies are considered most important components of Coptic heritage, while (70%) revealed to music, literature and legends. Finally (50%) considered crafts, dance and ritual as important components of Coptic heritage. This agrees with Françoise Benhamou who mentioned that, Coptic heritage includes tangible heritage (*i.e.* historical buildings, monuments, etc.) and intangible heritage as well which includes values, traditions, language, social habits, skills, etc. (Benhamou, 2013). It is not only an architectural heritage, as it includes all walks of life and represents people's identity.

**1/2- The most important Coptic heritage sites in Egypt:**

Table (2): Coptic heritage sites in Egypt\*

<b>Coptic heritage sites</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
The Monastery of Saint Anthony	10	100%
El Bagawat Necropolis	8	80%
Wadi el Natrun	10	100%
Kellia	9	90%
The Red Monastery and the White Monastery	8	80%
St George church, the Coptic Orthodox Church and the Church of the Holy Virgin in Sohag	7	70%
The monastery of the Virgin Mary in Minya	5	50%
The Malak Church is 8 km south west of Assuit	4	40%

\* More than one answer is valid

It is resulted from the field study that the most important Coptic heritage sites in Egypt are the Monastery of Saint Anthony by (100%), Wadi el Natrun by (100%), Kellia by (90%), El Bagawat Necropolis and the Red Monastery and the White Monastery by (80%), followed by other important Coptic heritage sites in Egypt as it shown in table (2). In addition to the above mentioned Coptic heritage sites, Egypt has a great fortune of Coptic monuments (*i.e.* The Hanging Church, Church of Abu Sergah (St Sergius), Church of the Virgin (Church of El-Adra) and Coptic Cathedral of Mar Morcos in Cairo (Asante, 2002), Deir Al-Azab and Monastery of Archangel Gabriel in El-Fayoum, Deir Saint Catherine in Sinai etc. ) (Kamil, 2002).

**1/3- Awareness of the importance of Coptic heritage among officials and locals:**

Table (3): Awareness of the importance of Coptic heritage

<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	3	30%
No	7	70%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is resulted from the field study that (70%) of experts which formed the sample said that there is no awareness of the importance of Coptic heritage by officials and citizens while (30%) of the sample indicate that there is awareness of the importance of Coptic heritage by officials and citizens. On

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

the other hand, there is a growing awareness of Egyptian Coptic heritage reflected in a notable increase in the number of tourists visiting Coptic sites like: Old Cairo with its ancient churches, the Coptic Museum, the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun, Abu Mina, Kellia, St. Antony, St. Paul, St. Catherine, etc. in recent years (Gabra, 2014).

### **1/4- Means that contributed to the raise of awareness of Coptic heritage:**

Table (4): Means that contributed to the raise of awareness of Coptic heritage\*

Means	Frequency	Percentage
Media	8	80%
Internet	6	60%
Government	4	40%
Private sector	3	30%

\* More than one answer is valid

The previous table illustrates the most means that contribute to the awareness of Coptic heritage which is the media (printed, audio and visual), followed by the internet through websites about Coptic heritage in Egypt, (40%) of the sample reveal that the government efforts contributed to the awareness of Coptic heritage, while (30%) of the sample said that the private sector has a role in raising awareness of Coptic heritage. It is apparent that there are various means to raise awareness of Coptic heritage (*i.e.* books, newspapers, magazines, films, TV programs, media campaigns, internet, etc. ). Each of these means has its own effectiveness and attractiveness (Kawakami *et al.*, 2012).

### **Part Two**

#### **Challenges facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region**

### **2/1- The existence of threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region:**

Table (5): The existence of threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region

Threats	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	10	100%
No	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the responses, all experts who formed the sample agreed that there are many threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region.

**2/2- Types of threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region:**

Table (6): Types of threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region\*

<b>Threats</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Tribal resistance	8	80%
Services	6	60%
Accessibility	9	90%
Neglect	10	100%
Natural disasters	7	70%
Lack of security	5	50%
Fragility of Coptic monuments	9	90%
Misuse and mismanagement of Coptic heritage sites	4	40%
Managerial deficiency	3	30%

\* More than one answer is valid

From the previous table it is concluded that there are many threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region which are neglect by (100%), the difficulty of accessibility and fragility of Coptic monuments by (90%), lack of understanding and cooperation between the tribes, and monks and antiquities inspectors by (80%), natural disasters such as fires, rain, floods and earthquakes by (70%), poor services in the area by (60%), lack of security measures in Wadi Feiran Region by (50%), misuse and mismanagement of Coptic heritage sites by (40%) and finally managerial deficiency by (30%). Accordingly, threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region could be classified into: Natural threats (*i.e.* earthquakes, flood, extreme rainfall, landslide, climate change, dust, moisture, flooding, sea-level rise, desertification, etc.) (Park, 2013) and human-caused threats (*i.e.* war, fires, restoration works, illegal excavation, illegal trade, theft, heavy traffic, urban development, excessive tourism etc.) (Lollino *et al.*, 2015) had been identified as the most immediate and irreversible threat facing heritage sites recently (UNESCO, 2011).

## Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region

### 2/3- Methods of overcoming these threats:

Table (7): Methods of overcoming threats facing Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region \*

Methods	Frequency	Percentage
Paying more attention to experts and scholars in the field of Coptic antiquities	7	70%
Documenting Coptic antiquities	10	100%
Enhancing safety and security systems	8	80%
Providing financial and human support	9	90%
Engaging the local community in conservation and preservation process of Coptic antiquities	5	50%
Raising awareness of Coptic heritage	6	60%

\* More than one answer is valid

Dealing with threats facing heritage sites is generally beyond the means of the local communities within which these sites are located. The state party has accepted the responsibility for ensuring the ongoing protection of world heritage within its territory. Therefore the main responsibility of ensuring the protection of these sites should rest on the state party, working together with stakeholders, local authorities and local organizations (The House of Commons Culture, 2006). According to the findings, there are many ways to overcome threats facing the Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region such as documenting Coptic antiquities by (100%), providing financial and human support by (90%), enhancement of safety and security systems in the area by (80%), paying more attention to experts and scholars in the field of Coptic antiquities by (70%), raising awareness of Coptic heritage through media campaigns and education by (60%), and engaging locals in the conservation and preservation process of Coptic antiquities by (50%).

**2/4- Difficulties of preserving Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region:**

Table (8): Difficulties of preserving Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region \*

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
The multiplicity and conflicts of laws concerning Coptic heritage	7	70%
Lack of awareness of Coptic heritage	9	90%
Insufficient documentation of Coptic antiquities	10	100%
Wide spread of Coptic antiquities across Egyptian deserts	6	60%
Inappropriate restoration	5	50%
Poor planning and management of Coptic Heritage sites	9	90%

\* More than one answer is valid

The findings of the interviews shed light on the challenges and difficulties to preserve Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region. It would be detailed as follows: (100%) of the sample indicated that many of the Coptic antiquities are neither documented nor recorded , (90%) of the sample mentioned that lack of awareness of Coptic heritage as well as poor planning and management of Coptic Heritage sites formed the biggest challenge that had to be overcome, (70%) of the sample stressed on the multiplicity and conflicts of laws concerning Coptic heritage, (60%) of the sample pointed to the wide spread of Coptic antiquities across Egyptian deserts and the difficulty of reaching it,(50%) of the sample revealed that inappropriate restoration of Coptic antiquities could be one of the difficulties which the experts face. These findings agree with the prevalent view that regards the protection and conservation of heritage sites constitute one of the most challenging problems which modern societies face. It involves variety of factors ranging from cultural and humanistic to technical and economical factors intertwining in inextricable patterns. As such, the problem of vulnerability of heritage sites requires multidisciplinary approach and highly qualified expertise in order to preserve the integrity and authenticity of these unique heritage sites (Vicko and Margottini, 2014).

**Part Three**

**Cooperation between national and international authorities to enhance the conditions of Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region**

**3/1- The role of public and private sector in preserving Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region:**

## Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region

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Table (9): Assessing the role of public and private sector in preserving Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region

<b>The role</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strong and effective role	-	-
Weak and ineffective role	7	70%
Non existence role	3	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

Although, the role of private sector in preserving heritage is extensive, there is an increasing consensus that the private sector is a vital complement to the role of public sector in preserving heritage. Also, it is expected that private-public partnerships will expand continuously (Seaman, 2013). It is noted that (70%) of the sample indicated that the role of public and private sector in preserving Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region is weak and ineffective role, while (30%) of the sample mentioned that this role is almost nonexistent so it needs to be further developed.

### **3/2-Evaluation of marketing efforts of Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region:**

Table (10): Evaluation of marketing efforts of Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region\*

<b>Efforts</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Inadequate financial resources allocated to marketing	8	80%
Directing most efforts to Pharaonic antiquities	4	40%
Ineffective marketing efforts of the Egyptian governmental sector	10	100%
Absence of cooperation and coordination between the Ministry of Antiquities and the Ministry of Tourism	9	90%

\* More than one answer is valid

Although heritage marketing is essential in creating, maintaining and enhancing the appeal of heritage to both existing and prospective tourists, the previous table illustrates that all experts who formed the sample agreed that marketing efforts of the Egyptian governmental sector are ineffective by (100%), also there is neither cooperation nor coordination between the

Ministry of Antiquities and the Ministry of Tourism by (90%), the findings showed also the inadequate financial resources allocated to marketing this heritage by (80%) since most of the efforts are directed to Pharaonic antiquities by (40%). Accordingly Coptic heritage marketing efforts need to be planned, developed and managed as part of the integrated and holistic marketing of destinations (Park, 2013).

**3/3- Reasons behind keeping Wadi Feiran in the Tentative List since 1994:**

Table (11): Reasons for waiting in the Tentative List\*

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Incomplete files of Egyptian heritage sites	9	90%
The conflict among governmental authorities responsible of managing Coptic heritage sites	3	30%
Discrimination considerations	8	80%
Lack of specialized managerial team in Egyptian heritage sites	6	60%

\* More than one answer is valid

It is apparent that there are many reasons that made Coptic heritage in Wadi Feiran Region still waiting in the Tentative List since 1994. (90%) of the sample held the incomplete files of Egyptian heritage for blame. (80%) of the sample believed that discrimination considerations (whether political, religious or economic ones) might affect the voting process for world heritage sites. (60%) of the sample think that the lack of specialized managerial team in Egyptian heritage sites (legal - archaeological - historic - environmental – geographic...etc.) might be the cause. Finally (30%) of the sample pointed to the conflict among governmental authorities responsible for managing Coptic heritage sites is the main reason.

It must also be taken into consideration that such process of designation is very long and difficult and it is not limited to the approval of the local authorities only. This process goes as follows: States Parties first had to write a Tentative List to be sent to UNESCO. Such Tentative Lists included cultural and natural sites that States Parties planned to nominate in the next five to ten years. Sites inscribed on Tentative Lists could be then nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List. Once received by the Secretariat, nomination dossiers were sent to the advisory bodies for independent

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

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evaluation in September. The third advisory body provided expert guidance on technical issues. Taking the advisory bodies' views into consideration, recommendations on individual nomination had to be prepared for the committee by its bureau, which meet in June. The committee then would make the final decision on each site during its annual session in December ( Labadi, 2013).

### **6. Conclusion**

Wadi Feiran has a competitive advantage represented in Gabal Al-Tahuna with its small churches, cells and tombs of hermits and monks that gives the site a precious opportunity to be included on the World Heritage List. Nevertheless, Wadi Feiran is still on the World Heritage Tentative List since 1994. Accordingly, it has been revealed that different challenges and risks are facing Coptic heritage in Egypt such as: Coptic heritage cannot be fully appreciated or studied without establishing a department of Coptology in the Egyptian universities. Coptic conservators are quite rare in Egypt. The rising levels of dampness in Coptic sites, because of irrigation projects for land reclamation also threaten this heritage in addition to lack of regular maintenance. Proliferation of urban expansion, and misuse and mismanagement of these Coptic heritage sites endanger them. Lack of security measures worsened the situation. This tempted looters of archaeological sites to target Coptic monuments in search for new spoils and unfortunately it seems that these attacks on Coptic sites will continue unless proper security forces are deployed to protect them. Furthermore, the support of local population is critical for conducting conservation activities in a steady manner. As the conservation and protection of Coptic heritage sites wouldn't be possible without sufficient financial resources to meet their needs, the prime reason of the problems related to Coptic heritage sites is the lack of adequate management plan. The poor fragile condition of mural paintings adorning originally mud-brick, plastered walls in Coptic sites constitutes another hindrance that requires developing new conservation training courses.

## **7. Recommendations**

Different recommendations could be directed to the following identities:

### **7.1- Egyptian Universities:**

- 1- Establishing research centers of Coptic archaeological studies under the supervision of Egyptian universities.
- 2- There must be more cooperation between the Egyptian universities and the Ministry of Antiquities.
- 3- There is an urgent need for establishing a department of Coptology at Egyptian universities to qualify inspectors of antiquities who can at least read Greek and Coptic as well as study Coptic archaeology.
- 4- Setting up a special institute for restoring and documenting Coptic heritage monuments and sites under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education.

### **7.2- Egyptian Ministries:**

- 1- Egyptian authorities should coordinate with international organizations to provide continuous and effective protection and restoration for Coptic heritage.
- 2- Drawing a map of all historic monasteries and churches in Egypt and determining their geographical location and the risks that may be exposed to either human or natural.
- 3- Devising appropriate management plans with effective implementation for Coptic Heritage Sites.
- 4- Studying the current status of each monument separately such as the level of groundwater and cracks in the walls and then start in the restoration and maintenance processes.
- 5- Enhancing the awareness of monks, in preserving Coptic monuments in Egypt.
- 6- Adopting training courses for managerial staff in Coptic heritage sites.
- 7- Using different promotional tools concerning Coptic Heritage Sites such as (books, films, CDs, newspapers, magazines, TV programs, media campaigns, internet, etc.).
- 8- Allocating funds for the conservation of Coptic heritage in Egypt.

### **7.3- Localities:**

## **Challenges Facing Coptic Heritage Tourism in Egypt A Case Study On: Wadifeiran Region**

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- 1- Big efforts should be undertaken to raise the awareness of local population living in the vicinity of Coptic heritage sites about the significance of these sites.
- 2- The culture of local citizens and their values should be taken into account in managing and planning Coptic heritage site.
- 3- Ensuring the cleanliness of Coptic heritage sites and surrounding areas to make these areas more attractive.
- 4- Well guard and secure Coptic heritage sites by providing them with modern fire and alarm devices in addition to personnel highly trained to use these devices.
- 5- Providing tour guides in Coptic heritage sites with different languages.

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