

## Creative Cultural Tourism in Egypt: Case Study of Papyrus and Pottery

Sahar Elkasrawy

Faculty of Art, Ain Shams University

### Abstract

Creative Tourism is considered as a new generation of tourism that involves tourists themselves and locals in the creation of the tourist products. Egypt is known for its varying productions from clothing, jewelry, weaving embroidery, tentmaking, leather, basketry, pottery, metals, glassblowing, stained glass, sculptured stones, batik, and papyrus...etc.

This study aims to explore the benefits of applying creative cultural tourism in Egypt in order to deliver authentic and unforgettable experiences to tourists. Therefore, two case studies were introduced as an attempt for engaging tourists in cultural heritage activities. The first one is the manufacturing of papyrus at El Qaramous village, in the Sharqiya governorate of Egypt's Nile Delta. The second case study is the manufacturing of pottery that goes back to the ancient Egyptian times. "Garagos", a village about 25 km North of Luxor, was very famous of this craft.

The study used both the qualitative as well as the quantitative approach; Interviews with were conducted Data collected was transcribed and analyzed using content analysis. In addition, an online survey addressed to tourists was designed and results discussed.

This study concluded that creative cultural tourism could engage tourists with the Egyptian intangible cultural heritage, granting them unique lifetime experiences. This type of tourism will not only attract more tourists and increase the tourism income, but also refresh the economy of the involved villages and offer locals financial benefits. In addition, it will encourage locals to appreciate and preserve their intangible cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Creative Tourism, Archeology, Crafts, Intangible Heritage

### Introduction

Creative Tourism is considered to be a new generation of tourism. (UNESCO, 2006). "Creative tourism is a type of tourism related to the active participation of travelers in the culture of the host community, through interactive workshops and informal learning experiences based on the characteristics of the holiday destination where they are undertaken" (Richards and Raymond, 2002).

According to Durmaz, et al (Durmaz, B., Platt, St. and Yigitcanlar, T., 2010), the strong relationship between tourism and creativity has been discussed by several authors. For example, Olson (Olson, 2010) stated that it "is a form of cultural tourism". Whereas, Richards & Wilson (Richards & Wilson, 2006), stated that is "a tourism that offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in in courses and learning experiences on topics that are typical of the destination".

This study aims to explore the benefits of creative cultural tourism to both tourists and the tourist destinations. It discusses the authentic experience that tourists can gain as well as the economic benefits that locals can get. In addition, a sense of identity and awareness of the value of local handicrafts is exerted leading to increased preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

### Creative Cultural Tourism

According to the UNESCO (UNESCO, 2006), "creative tourism is a travel directed toward an engaged and authentic experience, with participative learning in the arts, heritage or special character of a space and it provides a connection with those who reside in this place and create this living culture". Therefore, Creative Tourism provides the opportunity for the engagement between locals and tourists who are interested in actively participating in and learning from an authentic experience; authentic – active participation (Wisudthiluck & Sangnit, 2014).

The advantage of creative culture Tourism is that, not only the tourists but also the locals share the same values and ethics for creativity, which will satisfy their passion and increase their self-confidence and awareness of the value of hand made products. (Chen-Yi Wu & others, 2017).

Nowadays the tourist is seeking these local places in order to have more contact with its people and engagement with the local culture and creative practices. The tourist does not only observe the local's unique techniques used in producing its artefacts but also participates in related activities (Chen-Yi Wu & others, 2017). This would lead to an unforgettable experience, increasing knowledge and understanding of the culture and the heritage of the tourist destination (Richard & others 2018).

On the other hand, it would help to conserve craft production by marketing local products more effectively to tourists, developing new outlets for craft sales and securing local jobs (Richards 2009) and saving craft heritage. This will positively increase local pride and appreciation to their handicrafts. Moreover, Montgomery (Montgomery, 2007) believes that successful tourist destinations are those that invest heavily in their capacity for creativity and that understand the importance of locality and cultural heritage. In addition, Smith (Smith, 2007) recommends that countries should link tourism strategies to local cultural heritage and community values and should avoid copy-cat schemes based on other cities' experiences and duplication.

Duistermaat and Groot (Duistermaat and Groot, 2008) stated that 'Traditional' crafts are interesting for archaeologists. It is the only way to directly observe techniques, the use of tools and space, how people organize themselves and what material traces their activities leave.

Both Duistermaat & Groot, who carried a project at Fustat<sup>1</sup>, as well as Nicholson & Patterson, who carried another one at Ballas<sup>2</sup>, have indicated that due to modernization and changes over the time, some crafts have vanished or lost their unique authentic production techniques which affected the quality of crafts and disappearance of the decorative art. The water jar of Fustat (Arabic Olla) is an example of this vanished crafts, while the pottery of Ballas is an example of crafts that has lost their artistic value and became commercial.

The creative cultural Tourism is a solution for that as it will increase awareness of art and heritage.

### **Case Study**

This study is an attempt to explore the benefits of applying creative cultural tourism in Egypt in order to deliver authentic and memorable experiences to tourists. Accordingly, the study introduced two case studies, namely, the manufacturing of papyrus at El Qaramous village, in the Sharqiya governorate and the manufacturing of pottery at "Garagos".

#### ***First Case Study; Tukh el Qaramus and Papyrus***

Tukh el Qaramus Egyptian name is Tꜣ-šnw.t-n-īnb-ḥꜣ meaning 'The storehouse of (the) white wall' situated 83 km north east of Cairo was considered to be one of the important cult centers in the Delta for Amun, Mut and Khonsu (Quie,1999). The site is famed for a treasure of precious objects from a Ptolemaic temple and is exhibited now at the Egyptian Museum (Bianchi, 1986; Porter & Moss, 1991).

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<sup>1</sup>The Fustat project was started in 2008. It is ethnoarchaeological project by the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC) and Leiden University and aims to document the partly demolished quarter and study the potters before they relocate potter at that time.

<sup>2</sup>The "Ballas Pottery Project" was set up in 1983, and we undertook fieldwork in April 1984, with the aim of studying the production of Ballas jars at the village of Deir el-Gharbi, Upper Egypt.

Fig.1: Mohamed Abd el Rahim at Qaramus; owner of papyrus factory



Source: the researcher, 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Nowadays Qaramus is considered as the only village where papyrus is planted. It all started 1977, when Dr. Anas Mustafa reintroduced the planting of papyrus. Dr. Anas studied Fine-Arts at Cairo University and took part in the project with Dr. Hassan Ragab, to plant the papyrus at his village. He started planting papyrus in his home village Qaramos. When papyrus growing proved to be profitable, the whole village followed his steps, and the village became the center of papyrus production in Egypt.

He taught more than 200 locals about the plantation of papyrus, production of papyrus papers and painting it (Mahmoud Fouly,2019).

Papyrus cultivation takes only two or three months. The plant needs only water and grows all year-round. Every house in Qaramos is a small papyrus factory and most of the village residents, and even the surrounding villages, are engaged in the business. They have abandoned other crops and have started planting only papyrus. A family can produce up to 1,000 sheets per week. However, the 25<sup>th</sup> January revolution has greatly affected the tourism industry in general as well as the papyrus production. So many villagers have abandoned cultivating papyrus and according to locals, the cultivation of papyrus has dropped from 500 acres to 30 acres or less (Abdel Rahman, 2012).

By the year 2019 a project was started by Dr. Nagwa Bakr in cooperation with the Ministry of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and Sharkia Governate, to document the manufacturing of papyrus in the UNESCO Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage List. It aims to record the places of papyrus planting, its factories, manufacturing stages as well as drawing and coloring (Nagwa, 2019).

### ***The papyrus plants***

The papyrus plant *Cyperus papyrus L.* plant was symbol of Lower Egypt in ancient Egypt. It grew at great swamps in backwaters of the Nile, especially in the Delta and could reach height of about 4m (Olson, 2010; Leach & Tait, 2000). The plant was used to make the first writing material. The earliest papyri were a blank roll found in an early dynastic tomb of Hemaka (3035) at Saqqara, dating to the beginning of the third millennium. The first written one was found at Wadi el Jarf dating to the 4th Dynasty. The papyrus was obtained throughout the Dynastic era, Greco Roman era, Byzantine and early Islamic era. The latest discovered papyrus is an Arabic document dating to 1087 A. D (Leach &Tait, 2000). By the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. the production of papyrus had declined.

Manniche (Manniche,1989) hast stated that the plant had been used in many ways; whether knitted into sail cloth and mats or looped into ropes or plaited into sandals. Jar stoppers and children's ball were also found. The papyrus was tied together to make boats or used as firewood. The flowers were used as base for all composite bouquets. Its stalks were edible and could be

eaten raw, boiled or roasted or its juice drunk like sugarcane. It had also been used in medicine by ancient Egyptian; as other herbs in bandages, as eye compress and with water could cure callosities. The ashes of the plant were used as toothpowder by the Copts and the ashes were applied on open wounds to dry them or for sores of the mouth and mixed with vinegar to treat nose bleeding in Islamic medicine. (Manniche, 1989)

The papyrus plant was a motif used in art. The papyrus swamps, harvest of the papyrus was depicted on the wall of the tombs, but manufacturing of papyri was not.

Figure 2: Harvest of the papyrus on the wall of tombs



after Blackman, A.M., *The Rock Tombs of Meir, Archeological survey of Egypt part II*, pl. IV

### ***Reintroducing the papyrus plant***

Today the plant is widely distributed over swamplands in Central and East Africa (Kayendeke, 2018). It is only cultivated in the Egyptian Nile valley today for commercial purposes. Travelers during the 19th centuries have reported seeing the plant growing at the site of Damietta and Lake of Manzala in Lower Egypt (Leach &Tait, 2000). In 1968 it was found growing widely at Wadi Natrun. Dr. El Hadidi at Cairo University has tried to plant a papyrus at that time, but the process was much less successful. The first successful plantation of this type in Egypt was started by Hassan Ragab in 1962, firstly by using roots from the Zoological Garden in Cairo and later with roots from Sudan. Successful samples were introduced in 1975 and appeared of excellent quality (Leach &Tait, 2000).

### ***Making a papyrus paper (Leach &Tait 2000, Olson 2010; Drenkham 1982)***

The manufacturing was not depicted in the tombs, but the only available document was of Pliny, who lived during the Roman era. The papyrus is made from the pith from the stem of the plant. Strips about 18 inches long were laid next to one another with a slight overlap, then another layer of strips was laid over the first, but at right angles to them. The two layers were then pounded into a nearly homogeneous and seamless mat that could be joined to others by beating on overlapping edges. This method is the one used by Hassan Ragab. Another way to make the papyrus paper is to first remove the outer rind and then use a needle used to peel off the pith in an unrolling action, thus obtaining one continuous slice. Two such layers would be combined to produce a papyrus sheet. Both methods were used during the ancient time. The last step for both methods is to beat or press the two layers and allow them to dry. This process takes from 5 to 10 days (Drenkham 1982; Leach &Tait 2000).

Unfortunately, mass production by some manufactures in recent time led to boil it first for 5 till 6 hours instead of soaking it without chemical for 5 to 6 days. Also, the addition of chemicals like caustic soda to soften the fibers and adding of bleaches in the manufacturing process, producing a poorer quality (Ragab 1986; Leach & Tait 2000).

### ***Second Case Study; Garagos and Pottery***

Pottery making is scattered throughout the country, like in Ballas village in Qena (Nickolson& Patterson, 1985) or Tunis village in Fayum (Radwan, 2016), Dendara, Nag Hamadi, Samanoud and studios at Harraniya (Ammoun, 1991). In 1956 a modern pottery center was established at Garagos (Fathy, 2000).

Garagos lies about 25 km north of Luxor and 650km south of Cairo. It all started when a Jesuit priest, Father de Mogolfier was sent to take care of a Coptic community in Garagos. He established a school in 1950 and decided to make potters out of them. His nephew Robert de Mogolfier, a potter by profession, and Father Philipp Ackermann, who succeeded Father de Mogolfier. Robert, trained them, while Dr. Hassan Fathy designed the plan for pottery center (Ammoun, 1991). This center was designed for the study of the traditional crafts and one of its sections was the production of pottery and ceramics. The building is 2,400 square meters and consists of a small factory, lecture areas, dormitories, exhibition galleries, glazing rooms, offices, a multi-purpose hall, and guest rooms for artists, all of which are centered around a series of open-air courtyards(Hassan Fathy, 2000; Abdel-moniem M. El-shorbagy, 2001).

Robert de Mogolfier and his successor Ackermann taught them where in the desert it was possible to find raw material and showed illustrations done elsewhere in the world. At the beginning they copied and then modified to correspond with their own view and heritage. Garagos is famous for the vases, plates, ashtrays, with light regular brush strokes and the statuette full of their imagination a series of fellahin characters. Their work was with great professionalism until they were tempted to produce quickly and sell more (Ammoun, 1991). After the revolution of 25th January, pottery sales have dropped tremendously, and many tourists have stopped visiting the site and have a tour in the factory of Garagos.

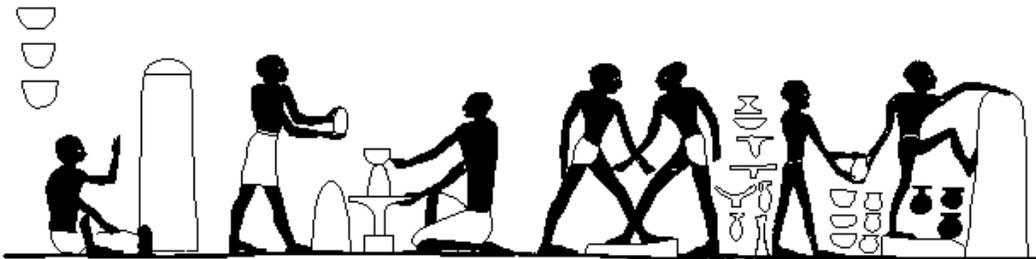
### ***Making of pottery***

Egyptian clay is divided into two main categories based on the raw sources, Nile Alluvium and Marl. The two different clays are characterized by different physical properties (Bourriau,& Nordström,1993).

Bourriau & Nordström (Bourriau&Nordström 1993) have stated that the Nile clay contains greater amounts of silica and can be fired at lower temperatures, around 700 to 800°C. The surface after firing is usually dark red or brown. Marls are fired at higher temperatures, between 800 and 1000°C. The color of surfaces is generally beige, pink, or very light yellow. Marl clay is very hard after firing. (Bourriau&Nordström 1993; Bourriau& Nicholson& Pamela 2000; Wodzinska 2009).

In the area around Qena marl is quarried and delivered to factories as a solid block which has to be broken and trampled in order to produce workable clay. The latter can still be seen at the area of Deir el Gharaband, Desouk.

Figure 3: Pottery making, tomb of Amenemhat, Beni Hassan Tomb 2



Source: Newberry, P.E, Beni Hassan, Part I. Archeological survey of Egypt, London 1893, pl. XI, <https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/newberry1893bd1/0116/image>

In the Predynastic Period, Vessels were modeled by hand or were molded by pressing clay into a hollow mold and by the beginning of the dynastic era the turntable or slow wheel was used. The usage of kick wheel was introduced in the Late Period. Finally, with a chip of wood or a bit of a tree branch the potter might add a little decoration, a wavy line. Then it is dried before firing it in the kiln or in the open (Bourriau& Nicholson& Pamela 2000)

Tourists can enjoy observing, learning and participating in all the stages of manufacturing any of the two examples previously discussed: papyrus and clay. This can be done through organizing a workshop to introduce the theoretical knowledge to tourists before going through the practical participation of manufacturing the handicrafts. No certain age is restricted; however, it is recommended that each age-category is handled separately.

This study discusses deeper the application of such workshops and activities related to local handicrafts that tourists can join in order to enjoy a unique authentic experience.

### **Research Methodology**

As mentioned before, this study aims to explore the potential of applying creative cultural tourism in Egypt by considering the papyrus in "Qaramos" and clay in "Garagos" as valuable case studies. The case study approach is suitable for both explanatory and exploratory researches (Saunders and Thornhill, 2009). In this study, two cases have been employed to provide the opportunity to observe and analyze the phenomenon

In order to achieve the aim of the study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were adopted.

Firstly, the study used the qualitative approach in order to explore the concept and aspects of applying creative cultural tourism. An online questionnaire was chosen as the survey instrument. Surveys are a good way of collecting data about the opinions and behavior of large numbers of people. A self-administered web-based survey was distributed during January and February 2020. Data was analyzed statistically using SPSS version 18. The sample size was 204 completed questionnaires.

Secondly, in-depth interview questions were formed in order to further deeply discuss answers and results from the online questionnaire. Interviews were made with owners of the papyrus as well as pottery factories in Qaramos and Garagos respectively.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### ***Questionnaire analysis:***

The online questionnaire was used to collect information to explore the concept and aspect of engaging tourists in Egyptian artifacts and consisted of two parts:

- Part 1-Tourist's General Information
- Part 2- Opinion and Attitude towards Creative Tourism; e.g., participation in a workshop for pottery and papyrus, engagement with the local and local culture and tradition, attending events and food experience.

The questionnaire consisted of 15 questions; ten of them used Likert scale from one "strongly agree" to five "strongly disagree". Ten questions aimed to collect information about engagement in cultural heritage activities and interaction with locals and the other five examined their preferred accommodation and workshop places.

The sample size consisted of 204 completed questionnaires. Most of the respondents were youth (20.2%) from 18 - 25 years old, 37.4% were from 26 - 35 years old, 30.3% were from 36-50 and 9.1% were above 51years old. Hence, the questionnaire covered all age ranges, ensuring the variety of social, demographic and characteristics of the respondents.

51% of the respondents were Egyptians and 49% were foreigners; of which about 20% from Tanzania and about 12 % from Germany and the rest from other 13 countries, which gives credibility to the research.

In general, the survey found that the majority would like to be engaged in authentic experiences (93.1%.) while about 2.5% were neutral and about 2% disagreed. 184 Respondents (85.3%)

agreed and only 4 (2%) disagreed to have personal contact with locals. 192 Respondents (94.1%) agreed while only 4 disagreed to try and be involved in local food preparation. 192 Respondents (94.1%) would like to attend local festivals and events. Most of the participants (118, 57.8%) are interested in learning the local language.

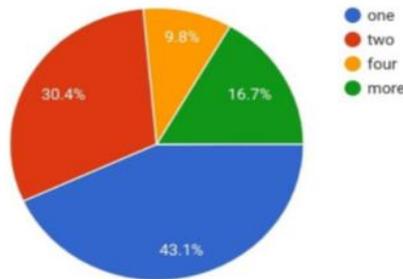
About 89.2% were interested in exploring the local art and visiting local artists while 76.5% were interested in joining group activities. Similarly, 154 (75.5%) of the respondents have positive opinions and agreed that papyri and pottery making can be one of the main tourist activities at the destination. 156 (76.5%) of the respondents agreed to participate in activities related to making their own souvenirs.

Most of the respondents (71.6%) believe that children will be interested in attending workshops related to the manufacturing of local handicrafts. It is expected that both parents and children will profit from such an experience.

The above-mentioned results show that most of the respondents are interested in being involved with the local people and in experiencing their intangible cultural heritage as this can help them in deeply understanding the social and cultural values of the community.

Concerning the length of workshop, the study found out that about 88 (43.1%) would like to attend a one-day workshop, while 34 (16.7%) would like to spend more than four days. This indicates that tourists are still more familiar with the traditional kind of tourism and hence, have very limited traveling time. In order to take part in activities like learning using pottery wheel may not be suitable. Therefore, marketing creative tourism needs a lot of effort in order to increase tourists' length of stay.

Figure 4: No of workshop days



Regarding the place, where workshop should take place, 68% agree that the theoretical part of the workshop should be organized at a main touristic city while the practical part can be at the handicraft's village. In case the place at the village is appropriate and provides all necessary facilities and services 70% agreed that both workshops could take place at the village specialized in the local art (papyri/pottery).

Fig.5: Location of workshop

13. Both practical and theoretical part of the workshop should be located at the village specialized in the local art (e.g. papyrus / pottery)

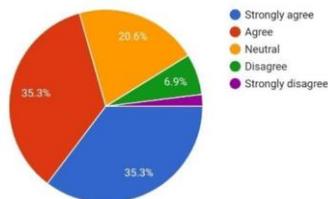
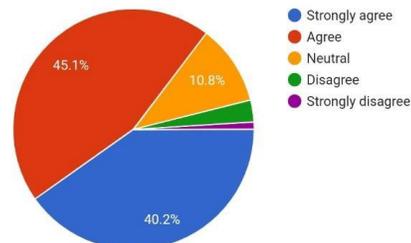


Figure6: Quality of accommodation

14. The quality of accommodation is of great importance to me



85.3% of respondents consider the quality of accommodation to be very important in order to choose a tourism destination. However, 51% agreed to stay at the village specialized in the local art if there is appropriate accommodation like hotel or resort there. Only 28.4% would stay at local houses and the rest 20.6% prefer to stay at a hotel in main touristic cities. This tackles the importance of having high quality infrastructure and tourist facilities and services.

### ***Interview analysis***

In-depth interviews with owners of handicrafts factories were conducted in Cairo and Qaramus. Two of the main interviewees were the director of Fustat Traditional Crafts Center<sup>3</sup> as well as the director of the Center for Papyrological Studies and Inscription at Ain Shams University in Cairo<sup>4</sup>. In Qaramus the main interviewee was the owner of the main factory for manufacturing papyrus there<sup>5</sup>. The in-depth interviews were designed to collect information about communication, readiness of tourists, activity reservation methods, capacity of hosts as well as problems and obstacles that they may have.

Interviewees in Qaramus stated that the facilities to host tourists are not available. However, the locals are willing to invite tourists in their houses, accommodate them and at the same time show them the different stages of manufacturing papyrus and how and where it is planted. As for the production of papyrus paper it only requires one day. They also pointed out that villagers have no Facebook page to display and market their products. Most of their production is sold to Papyrus institutes or tourists' souvenir shops like the ones in Cairo, Hurghada, Sharm el Sheikh etc..

A successful 4-day papyrus workshop was organized in June 2019 by the director of the Center for Papyrological Studies and Inscription at Ain Shams University. On the first day, the theoretical and practical training for making papyri, without using chemicals, was conducted. The second day was dedicated to teaching the methods of restoration of papyrus (theoretical and practical). Two field visits took place in the other two days: the Egyptian Museum's Papyrus Gallery and Qaramus. The interviewee explained that the organization for the workshop took 2 months and that the Center at the time being can only receive 10 to 15 guests only.

Regarding the pottery, Garagos is a big city and can be one of the main pottery centers that can organize workshops and offers needed tourist facilities. The place can receive about 20 guests. Interviewees stated that in order to learn using the pottery wheel and modeling an art piece, it requires at least 7 days to 10 days. However, modeling by hand would only require between one to two days. As for learning the techniques of glazing, this would probably require 2 to 4 days. The center could provide artists speaking foreign languages and with high tuitions skills, so they could communicate successfully with the guests. Interviewees stated that the center has a Facebook page, however it is not updated.

Reaching Qaramus and the surrounding fields is not easy as there are no signs and the road at some part is too narrow. As for the Fustat Center it is easy to reach and is situated at Old Cairo behind the oldest Mosque in Africa, Amr ibn el As mosque and beside the Coptic Museum, Old Churches and Synagogue. The papyrological Center is at Ain Shams University and easily to reach.

### **Conclusion and recommendation**

Creative Cultural Tourism can offer many advantages to both tourist destinations as well as tourists. Tourists can enjoy a unique and authentic experience through getting acquainted with locals and their intangible cultural heritage; customs, traditions, language, food, handicrafts...etc.

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<sup>3</sup>Dr. Hisham Ahmed Gomaa Mahmoud

<sup>4</sup>Dr. Noha Ahmed Salem

<sup>5</sup>Mohamed Abd el Rehim

At the same time, locals will be aware of the value of their cultural heritage, increase their feeling of pride and identity and offer them socioeconomic benefits.

This study explored the positive attitude that most of the tourists have towards, and in favor of, supporting Creative Tourism. Most of them are also interested in taking part in activities that reflect Creative Tourism, for example learning how to make local handicrafts or make their own souvenirs.

Moreover, the study discussed two case studies; papyrus in Qaramus and Pottery in Garagos, which proved the need to increase the quality of infrastructure and tourist services and facilities in villages, specialized in local handicrafts; especially accommodation and transportation. The theoretical and practical part for the papyrus workshop can be held at main touristic cities as the required facilities are not available at Qaramus. It is worth mentioning, that the site of Tukh el Qaramus is distinctive by its Museum of Tell Basta the temple of RamsisII at Tanis. It also holds one of the biggest events, namely, "Arab Horses Festival". Knowing that, it is highly recommended to urge its provision with all necessary high-quality tourist services and facilities. Moreover, as the Center of Papyrological Studies could only receive small groups, it is recommended to construct a bigger center and a resort at Sharqiya district. Papyrus workshops can take place there, where tourists can learn all techniques of producing Papyri free of chemicals for a healthy green environment.

Concerning pottery workshops, the theoretical and practical part can be held at Garagos for the tourists visiting Upper Egypt. It can also be held at Fustat at its Traditional Crafts center, especially as on the other side of the road the Center for Potter, known as Fakharin, is located. The center is also surrounded with many cultural sites at Old Cairo.

It is also recommended to raise local awareness and to encourage local artists by organizing events like the one held recently at Fustat Traditional Crafts Center (February, 2020), where all potters were invited and given the opportunity to exhibited their art. However, this event lacked the proper marketing and future events should take this into consideration.

Finally, it is highly recommended to take all necessary steps in order to register all unique Egyptian artifacts on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. This will preserve the authentic manufacturing techniques of the artifacts and protect them from losing their quality and becoming commercial.

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