

Conservation Plan for Abila Archaeological Site

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- Conservation intervention for Abila archaeological site should include the following measures:
- condition assessment,
- cleaning,
- consolidation,
- restoration,
- reconstruction and
- removal of wrong conservation materials.

Conditions Assessment

- The first step for preparation of a conservation plan for Abila or any other archaeological site is to study and analyze the present situation of that site.
- Wrong previous conservation, cracking of columns, erosion of mortar joints, dampness penetration through the foundation of the walls, and instability of the foundation, are the main symptoms of deterioration at the site.
- It must be emphasized here that the site is not fully excavated, and even the excavated part is suffering from negligence which enhances the action of the different factors of deterioration.

- The deterioration forms that could be documented at the site include:
- cracking,
- soiling,
- blackening,
- lost of strength,
- fungal stain,
- harmful growth of plants,
- graffiti,
- erosion of mortar and plaster





Level of conservation intervention

- Conservation intervention can be classified into the following levels:
- **a. Maximum Respect for Historic Fabric,** which includes the following actions:
 - Preservation,
 - Stabilization,
 - Consolidation,
 - Restoration and
 - Rehabilitation

- **b. Moderate Respect for Historic Fabric such as:**
- Reassembly,
- Replication,
- Reconstruction,
- Moving and
- Fragmentation

c. Limited Respect for Historic Fabric as:

- Renovation and
- Modernization

Different factors play an important role in determining the level of intervention at the site of Abila, these factors include:

1. Condition of the site.
2. Availability of financial resources and experts.

3. Purpose of the site conservation, which may be only for scientific purpose, in this case the significances of the site must be preserved, which means that only preventive measures are needed to be adopted, and no intervention is needed.
- The other reason for the conservation of the site may be to make it tourism attractive site. In this case interventive conservation should be conducted.

Suggested conservation intervention for Abila:

- Based on the condition analysis of the site, its values and significances in addition to its future utilization the following conservation measures are recommended:

- 1. Cleaning:** the first action to be conducted in the site is to clean it to remove dirt, higher plants, lichens, ivy etc.
- For this purpose both mechanical and chemical, by using pesticides, should be adopted. However, for determining the method to be used, it is important to test it thoroughly.

- 2. Consolidation:** due to prevailing deterioration factors affecting the site, some building stones, especially limestone, lost its strength and became soft, therefore, consolidants should be applied to reestablish the weakened strength.
- To determine what type of consolidant that can be used, a series of testing procedures should be devised.

- **3. Restoration:** Restoration should be based on respect for existing material and on the logical interpretation of all available evidence, so that the place is consistent with its earlier form and meaning.
- It should only be carried out if the cultural heritage value of the place is recovered or revealed by the process.
- The restoration process typically involves reassembly and reinstatement and may involve the removal of accretions.

- 4. Reconstruction:** Reconstruction is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of additional materials where loss has occurred.
- Reconstruction may be appropriate:
 - if it is essential to the function or understanding of a place,
 - if sufficient physical and documentary evidence exists to minimize conjecture, and
 - if surviving heritage values are preserved.

- Reconstruction should not normally constitute the majority of a place.
- In some cases, in Abila, the original design of an archaeological feature may be known but the original building materials are not available as a result of being reused by the locals. In such a case no restoration can be conducted, instead reconstruction might be necessary.
- The most important feature which needs to be reconstructed is the Basilica of Umm El-Amad.

5. Removal of wrong conservation materials:

wrong conservation materials such as Portland cement and iron bars used for the *conservation* of the monuments at the site should be removed and replaced by other materials which do not negatively affect the building materials.

- Therefore, ancient mortar should be thoroughly examined, reconstructed and tested to use it as an alternative for the Portland cement. While the iron bars can be replaced by stainless steel.