

## **In Memory of Kamel Abou el-Saadat**



**The Pioneer of Underwater Archeological Excavation**

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

### In Memory of Kamel Abou el-Saadat, the Pioneer of Underwater Archeological Excavation



Issuing a special issue entitled «Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Arab Region» is in memory of Kamel Hussein Abou el-Saadat, the first Egyptian to employ fishing and diving to excavate underwater antiquities in Alexandria. He was a professional diver and a primary source of archaeological information about sites, antiquities, and archaeological treasures underwater on the coast of Alexandria. Thus, he was praised by archaeologists who compared him to the French diver and researcher «Gondet»

Abou el-Saadat began diving in 1960 at the age of twenty after mastering underwater fishing and diving to great depths, which enabled him to excavate many of Alexandria's underwater treasures. It was my honor at the age of nine to meet Abou el-Saadat for the first time in 1961 in the Casino de Mont-Carlo in Alexandria, Egypt, with my father, Ismail Yaseen (actor), and Abdel Fattah al-Qasri (actor) at a dinner invitation by Abdel Moneim Alba who was a senior party caterer in Alexandria. Alba introduced Abou el-Saadat as a professional diver who invited us for lunch on the following day. From a young age, my favorite hobby was fishing. My father had two Nile rafts, N°.62 and N°.64, on Gabalaya Street in Zamalek. I was keen to collect leftover food for fish in the Nile, as I enjoyed seeing the fish gather around the leftover food.

Then, I used my hook to catch fish. Thus, I waited enthusiastically for the next day's lunch to meet the professional diver Abou el-Saadat, who sat beside me, showing the difference between fishing in the Nile and the sea. He provided me with much information about fishing arts, especially underwater fishing. Then, Abou el-Saadat told the audience about underwater treasures, believing that ancient Alexandria was underwater as its ruins were still visible, including ports, locations, and treasures. His information and observations impressed the audience as if he had a complete map of ancient Alexandria. This was the only time I met him.

I was keen to keep up to date with Abou el-Saadat's underwater archaeological discoveries and achievements, such as discovering a giant red-granite statue lying next to Al Silsilah, a huge statue of a Ptolemaic queen dressed like goddess Isis, the underwater remains of the ancient Eastern Harbor and its famous Lighthouse at Qaitbay site while working as an expert with UNESCO in 1968 assisted by the Egyptian Navy, and of Isis Pharia next to the Citadel of Qaitbay. Abou el-Saadat continued his archaeological excavations by the 1980s when he found — as he believed — a marine barrier, a number of stony anchors in Maamoura, as well as several marine quays around Nelson Island in Abu Qir Bay. He was then able to locate some ships of the French fleet that had sunk in Abu Qir Bay. Thus, he assisted Jack Doma, 1983-1984, in his excavation of studying and salvaging a part of Napoleon Bonaparte's fleet.

Thanks to his considerable achievements in underwater archaeological excavation, Abou el-Saadat was a guide and expert for several missions working on underwater archaeological excavation of sites in Alexandria. Therefore, he was always honored and appreciated by all international and regional organizations. Unfortunately, he died as a martyr in the service of the Egyptian national heritage on Friday, June 22, 1984, in mysterious circumstances when he was on a diving trip on board Le Bon Pasteur, a French ship, during his participation in the search project for Napoleon's fleet in (1984-1985). His death was unjustifiable, heartbreaking news as he was a skilled diver and swimmer.

Whatever the reasons for his death, Kamel Hussein Abou el-Saadat will remain the pioneer of the archaeological survey of underwater antiquities. He left a huge scientific school of underwater antiquities, currently led by his students who became masters of this science and succeeded in completing the process of archaeological excavation in all seaports in Egypt, including Prof./ Emad Khalil, Dr./ Osama Al-Nahhas, Dr./ Ibrahim Darwish, Dr./ Mohamed Mustafa, and others who will continue the search for Egypt's underwater treasures.

Finally, I express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Prof./ Emad Khalil, the executive director of Alexandria Centre for Maritime Archaeology & Underwater Cultural Heritage, and Dr./ Osama Al-Nahhas, heritage expert at UNESCO, for their outstanding efforts and keen interest in editing this distinguished issue «Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Arab Region» in memory of the deceased Kamel Hussein Abou el-Saadat, the pioneer of underwater archaeological survey.

**Prof. Mohamed Mohamed El kahlawey**



Cairo, 20/05/2024

## INTRODUCTION

The Arab region is the birthplace of some of humanity's most ancient civilizations. Flourishing in North Africa, Mesopotamia, the Levantine coast, and the Arabian Peninsula, these societies included the Egyptians, Canaanites, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Hittites, Babylonians and Nabataeans. As a result, the Arab world boasts an unparalleled wealth of material culture inherited from these bygone eras.

Throughout history, the Arab world has been inextricably linked to water. The shores of the Eastern Mediterranean, Red Sea, Arabian Gulf, and the banks of the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates Rivers have all borne witness to thriving maritime cultures. These seafaring societies have passed down to us a vast and fascinating legacy of maritime and underwater archaeology.

Oceans of the world, encompassing vast and enigmatic depths, serves not only as a reservoir of marine biodiversity but also as a repository of human history. Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) encompasses a diverse array of remains, ranging from shipwrecks and ancient harbours to submerged settlements and landscapes. These submerged sites offer invaluable insights into past societies, trade networks, and technological advancements, acting as witness to past eras.

This edited volume delves into the captivating realm of UCH, showcasing the multifaceted nature of underwater archaeological research across the Mediterranean Sea and beyond. Divided into eight papers, the volume explores a rich tapestry of topics, reflecting the breadth and depth of contemporary UCH studies.

The opening paper by Alaa Ababneh provides a timely review of emerging technologies poised to revolutionize the field of underwater archaeology. By examining cutting-edge tools and methodologies, Ababneh lays the groundwork for future exploration and discovery, propelling the discipline forward.

Subsequent papers delve into specific geographical regions and archaeological sites. Emad Khalil sheds light on the ancient anchorage of Zygris/Ladamantia (Marsa Bagoush) on the northwest coast of Egypt, illuminating maritime activities in the region. Ikram Harouni shifts focus to the vestiges of the First World War in Algeria, highlighting the potential of underwater sites to document more recent historical events, thus expanding the temporal scope of UCH research. Jafar Anbar offers a comprehensive review of harbour and coastal archaeology in Syria, drawing on past and recent archaeological and geoarchaeological surveys, providing a holistic understanding of past maritime landscapes.

Moving beyond the traditional confines of underwater sites, Marwa Abdel Aziz embarks on a captivating exploration of the iconography present in nobles' tombs in Egypt. Her analysis reveals how the study of Old Kingdom ship steering devices can extend beyond the iconographic representations, aiming to enrich our understanding of ancient maritime technology. Marwan Mady investigates the origins of dovetail joints in ancient Egyptian boats and ships, offering insights into shipbuilding techniques and technological advancements.



The following papers explore written records in conjunction with physical remains. Mohamed Abdelmaguid and Mohamed Al-Sharkawy analyze the «Autobiography of Weni», focusing on the expedition to Hatnub. This crucial source of information serves to illuminate ancient Egyptian maritime activities, providing a textual counterpart to the archaeological record.

Finally, Zakia Chabane takes us back in time, examining the relationship between early modern humans and the marine environment through the lens of the Iberomaurusian culture. This paper broadens the chronological scope of the volume, demonstrating the potential of UCH research to shed light on early human interactions with the maritime world.

This edited volume brings together the expertise of leading scholars in the field of maritime and underwater archaeology. By showcasing a range of methodologies, geographical areas, and historical periods, the volume underscores the critical role of maritime archaeological research in enriching our understanding of the past. As we continue to explore the depths of our oceans, the potential for unraveling the mysteries of human history seems truly boundless.

We invite readers, both seasoned researchers and those new to the field, to embark on this captivating exploration of maritime and underwater cultural heritage.

**Emad Khalil**

UNESCO Chair, Underwater Cultural Heritage  
Vice-President, Misr University for Science and Technology

Almost three decades of extensive underwater and coastal excavations in the waters of the Arab region uncovered thousands of sunken artifacts and submerged heritage sites. This richness of artifacts and structures emphasizes the vital role of the region in forming ancient civilizations and writing the crucial chapters of the history of humanity. This abundance of sunken structures and artifacts provides invaluable insights into the technological accomplishments, economic networks, military struggles, and cultural interactions of ancient civilizations.

From the submerged harbors and sunken ships of ancient Egypt, Syria, and the Levant to the shipwrecks of medieval and modern trade vessels along the coast of the Arabian Gulf and Indian Ocean, these discoveries encouraged archaeologists from the Arab world to enter a new era of underwater heritage research to decipher the clues of this hidden and enigmatic world.

The dream came true when the Arab Archaeologists Union decided to dedicate a special edition of its journal to maritime and underwater heritage in the Arab region and its surroundings. This thematic collection is a milestone in our efforts to identify and illuminate the rich, diversified heritage that lies alongside and beneath our seas, rivers, and lakes.

This special issue contains a number of innovative research papers that represent a wide variety of topics, including the future of innovative technologies in underwater excavation, maritime activities along the northwest coast of Egypt, interpretation of maritime trade networks, textual and iconographic evidence of maritime activities, shipwrecks of the world war, and finally the management of underwater and maritime cultural heritage as a tool to achieve sustainable development goals. The contributions reflect the efforts of archaeologists, historians, and scientists from the Arab world and beyond to emphasize the importance of our underwater and maritime heritage throughout history.

We are most grateful to all our contributors, reviewers, and editorial team for their hard work and professionalism that have made this special issue possible. We hope that, while reading the researches of this special issue, you will be inspired by the discoveries and discussions presented here. We are looking forward to preserving and sustaining the rich underwater and maritime heritage of the Arab world for the benefit of future generations and humanity.

**Dr./ Osama El Nahas**

Heritage Expert at ICESCO