

# **Dream Incubation Tourism: The Resurrection of Ancient Egyptian Heritage of Sleep Temples**

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Engy El-Kilany<sup>1</sup> and Islam Elgammal<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

Ancient Egyptian heritage has been explored over centuries; however, its secrets have not been fully discovered. This study aims to highlight the idea of dream incubation that was used by Ancient Egyptians and explore its applicability under the umbrella of health tourism and special-interest tourism. Such resurrection of Ancient intangible heritage was explored in the Siwa Oasis protected area; located in the western desert of Egypt. Siwa possesses a number of features that may facilitate the application of Dream incubation. Theoretical background will be given, focusing on dream incubation sleep temples in Ancient Egypt. The case of Siwa is then discussed to explore opportunities for dream incubation as a new type of special-interest tourism and health tourism. This was done by using three focus groups with potentially involved stakeholders. The findings suggested a model of Dream Incubation Tourism consisting of four aspects (location, dreamer, incubation rite and stakeholders). The findings also highlighted the challenges that could be faced in taking a step towards this type of the revival of ancient culture heritage and hence a number of recommendations were suggested.

## **Keywords**

Sleep Temple, Dream Incubation Tourism, Ancient Egyptians, Intangible Heritage.

## **Introduction**

Modern reconstructions, or revivals, of the past have proven to be unique in fields as diverse as fiction writing, music compositions, songs, ancient festivals, movies, theater, and therapeutic practices. Culture heritage is a collection of the ways a community is able to pass on their lifestyle from generation to generation. They can include customs, practices, places, monuments, objects, artistic expressions, and values. Cultural heritage is often expressed as either intangible or tangible. It is considered the legacy of physical science artifacts and intangible attributes of a nation that are inherited from the past generation, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of the future generation.<sup>3</sup>

Ancient Egyptians were famous for developing various medications for most diseases. One of the techniques used for curing was “dreams”, which is considered an important aspect of the Ancient Egyptian intangible heritage.<sup>4</sup> Dreams sort out our memories, helping us to coordinate new opinions, learn new tasks, and update our emotional outlook. These activities only take place during sleep, and they allow all the neuronal gates to open up.<sup>5</sup> Ancient Egyptians linked sleep to death and the afterlife. They were experts in dream interpretation and they used healing temples, or sanctuaries, to cure people of various medical problems, particularly psychological problems. These healing temples were called “Sleep, or Dream, Incubation

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<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Minia University.

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Suez Canal University.

<sup>3</sup> R. Macnulty and R. Koff, *Cultural Heritage Tourism*, Partners for Livable Communities, Washington, 2014(, 6.

<sup>4</sup> G. Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt*, (London, British museum press, 1994), 138; F.J.Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, (London, British museum press, 1996), 25.

<sup>5</sup> A. Hobson, *The Dreaming Brain: How the brain creates both the sense and the nonsense of dreams*. Basic Books, Inc., (New York, 1988), 5.

Temples”.<sup>6</sup> The Ancient Egyptians’ practices of dreaming while sleeping in god’s temple is similar to recent practices of people visiting scared places to spend the night asleep, with the hope of dreaming of the prophets they believe in; this may give certain people comfort and peace of mind. Modern application for psychotherapy includes deep sleep practicing under the name of incubation.<sup>7</sup>

This study aims to highlight the idea of dream incubation used by the Ancient Egyptians and explore its applicability under the umbrella of health and special-interest tourism. Such resurrection of Ancient intangible heritage was explored in Siwa oasis protected area. Siwa is located in the western desert of Egypt and possess a number of features that may facilitate the application of Dream incubators. The theoretical background in this study will focus on the use of dream incubation sleep temples in Ancient Egypt including the Greco-Roman period. The case of Siwa is then discussed to explore opportunities for dream incubators as a type of health-tourism. This was accomplished by using three focus groups with potentially involved stakeholders. Dream incubators in sleep temples are considered an idea that could be marketed to niche tourists. These tourists will be looking for either using it as a therapy practice, as a new adventure, or as a spiritual experience inspired from the Ancient Egyptian intangible heritage.

## Dreams in Ancient Egypt

The earliest known evidence of dreams in Ancient Egypt is found in the texts known as “Letters to the Dead”. These letters, which mostly date back to the First Intermediate Period, were dreams addressed to the deceased relatives commonly asking for favors on behalf of the living person, and they were left in the tomb of the receiver.<sup>8</sup> Ancient Egyptian dreams were first explored by Aksel Volten; his primary concern was publishing a demotic dream book dating to the Greco-Roman period to explore the issue of dream interpretation.<sup>9</sup> The work of Serge Sauneron is the main source of dream research in Ancient Egypt. He focused on exploring the emotional response of the dreamer and differentiating between dreams that arise impulsively and those that are invoked.<sup>10</sup> John Ray added to the body of knowledge of Hellenistic dream interpretation and incubation techniques by his publication of the archive of Hor of Sebennytos.<sup>11</sup>

Recently, Szpakowska investigated the function of dreams in Ancient Egypt. She tried to capture the Egyptians’ own perceptions of dreams<sup>12</sup> and presented a comprehensive study of dreams as they were perceived and interpreted from the Old Kingdom to the New Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> This was followed by a study on Dreams in the Ramesside Period.<sup>14</sup>

Sleep in Ancient Egypt was viewed to be similar to death, as when the person is in a different world. Ancient Egyptians believed in the ability of the ba (soul) to travel beyond the physical body during sleep.<sup>15</sup> Ancient Egyptians perceived dreams as aspects that exist but could not be seen or heard in the actual life. A dream was considered the space between the world of the living and the other world that give the dreamer access to communicate with gods and the dead who are the dwellers of the afterlife.<sup>16</sup> The word *rswt*<sup>17</sup> refers to “dream”. It is symbolized by the image of an open eye, which is used to indicate visual perception. The Ancient Egyptians did not develop a verb for dreaming, they used only the noun, which may refer to their belief that dreams do

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<sup>6</sup> T. Asaad, *Sleep in Ancient Egypt*, (Springer, 2015), 13-19, in: Chokroverty, S. and Billiard, M. (eds.), *Sleep Medicine. A Comprehensive Guide to Its Clinical Milestones, and Advances in Treatment*, New York/Heidelberg/Dordrecht/London : (<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4939-2088-4>, accessed, 1.11.2015).

<sup>7</sup> N. Pesant and A. Zadra, *Working with Dreams in Therapy: What do we know and what should we do?* Clinical Psychology Review, (Canada, University of Montreal, 2004), (24), pp 489–512.

<sup>8</sup> A. Gardiner, and K. Sethe, *Egyptian Letters to the Dead: Mainly from the Old and the Middle Kingdoms*, the Egyptian Exploration Society, (London, 1928); A. Gardiner, “A New Letter to the Dead”, in JEA 16, London, 1930, 19-22.

<sup>9</sup> A. Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung, (Pap. Carlsberg VIII and XIV verso)*, Analecta Aegyptiaca III; (Kopenhagen: Einar Munksgaard, 1942), 40-41.

<sup>10</sup> S. Sauneron, *Les songes et leur interpretation dans l’Egypte ancienne*, Sources Orientales II, (Paris, 1959), 18-61.

<sup>11</sup> J. D. Ray, *The Archive of Hor*, (Texts from Excavations 2:: The Egypt Exploration Society, (London, 1976), 130.

<sup>12</sup> K. Szpakowska, “*Through the Looking Glass Dreams in Ancient Egypt.*” (New York, 2001), 29-43.

<sup>13</sup> K. Szpakowska, “*Behind closed eyes: dreams and nightmares in ancient Egypt.*” Classical Press of Wales, (Swansea, 2003), 147-151.

<sup>14</sup> K. Szpakowska, *Dream Interpretation in the Ramasid Age*, in Mark Collier and Steven Snape (eds.) *Ramesside studies in the honour of K. A. Kitchen*, Rutherford Press, (Bolton, 2011) 509-17.

<sup>15</sup> J. Assmann, *Death and salvation in ancient Egypt*. Ithaca: (Cornell University Press, 2006), .90-95.

<sup>16</sup> Szpakowska, *Dream Interpretation in the Ramasid Age*, 510.

<sup>17</sup> Wb II, 452, 1-4.

not arise within the dreamer himself, but rather that something outside the dreamer will cause the dream to occur.<sup>18</sup> A dream was also known as “*qed*”, which comes from the word «sleep.» When this word meant «sleep,» it was followed by the image of a bed, but when it meant «dream», the image of the open eye was again used. Such a combination makes the word “dream” to be read as “awaken within sleep”.<sup>19</sup>

There are three main types of dreams in Ancient Egypt: dreams that gods would declare some moral act, dreams that contained warnings, and dreams that came about through rituals.<sup>20</sup> The Ancient Egyptians tried to communicate with their dream world by performing religious ritual to call the “invisible spirits”. They believed that communicating with those spirits would bring success, warnings, recovery from illnesses, or merely pleasurable experiences. They also believed that their gods revealed themselves in dreams and visions.<sup>21</sup> The best way to get the desired answer, especially in sickness, was to “incubate”.

## Dream Incubation

The word “incubate” comes from the Latin “incubare”, which means “to lie down upon.”<sup>22</sup> The definition covers any act of deliberate sleep to produce dreams.<sup>23</sup> To incubate dreams is the practice of sleeping in a temple for the purpose of receiving a dream or healing.<sup>24</sup> ‘Incubation’ is a practice in which a person performs a ritual act and then sleeps in a sacred place, with the deliberate intention of receiving a dream.<sup>25</sup> Incubation may be classified according to the purpose, either for a cure or for directing the dreamer to a specific action.<sup>26</sup> To help call a god, the dreamer would often recite a special prayer. Under the influence of incantation and the performance of religious rituals, sick people were prepared psychologically; they were put into a “hypnotic state” in the hope of provoking dreams sent by gods.<sup>27</sup> (Most evidence of dream incubation in sleep temples dates back to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods in Egypt.<sup>28</sup> .

Dream incubation was one of the important healing methods in Ancient Egypt. It was believed that dreams could serve as oracles, bringing messages from gods.<sup>29</sup> To achieve this, individuals would often go through rituals of cleansing and fasting. They would abstain from certain food and beverages, such as meat, beans, and wine; they would also abstain from sexual relations for several days prior to entering the temple. Individuals would then be purified by cold water.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the name of the god the person wished to communicate with would be written on a piece of linen, which was then burned in a lamp.<sup>31</sup> The sick dreamer would then lie down upon a special bed with a large number of harmless yellow snakes.<sup>32</sup> These rituals were not fixed through the ancient Egyptian history; some of them were practiced at certain periods and disappeared in other periods.

## Sleep temples

Sleep temples were built specifically for dream incubation and were open to everyone who believed in the temple gods. The most famous gods and goddess who were related to dreams in the New Kingdom were Meret-Sedgr, Thoth, Bes, and Isis. In the Greco-Roman Period, the primary deities were Hathor, Serapis, Isis, and Defied Imhotep (*Æsculpius*).<sup>33</sup> In the Greco-Roman period, sleep temples were well known as centers of great healing, or sanatoriums (large therapeutic center during

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<sup>18</sup> Szpakowska, *Through the Looking Glass Dreams in Ancient Egypt*, 30.

<sup>19</sup> Asaad., Sleep in Ancient Egypt, 13; A.K.H. Solaiman, *Dreams in the beliefs of ancient Egyptians*, (Unpublished PhD diss., Cairo University, 2006), 2.

<sup>20</sup> H. Collins, Diagram Visual Information Limited. *Understanding dreams.*, (Harper Collins; 2005), 220–23.

<sup>21</sup> L. Ciruolo and J. Seidel, *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, (Leiden, 2002), 91; Mackenzie, *Dreams and Dreaming*, 93.

<sup>22</sup> S. Chokroverty and M. Billiard, *Sleep Medicine: a Comprehensive Guide to its Development, Clinical Milestones, and Advances in Treatment*, (Springer, 2015), 14.

<sup>23</sup> K. Patton, A Great and Strange Correction: Intentionality, Locality, and Epiphany in the Category of Dream Incubation’, in (*History of Religions*, 2004) Vol. 43, No. 3, 194-223.

<sup>24</sup> Szpakowska, *Dream Interpretation in the Ramasid Age*, 516; Asaad, Sleep in Ancient Egypt, 14.

<sup>25</sup> J. Harrison, The classical Greek practice of incubation and some Near Eastern predecessors, [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu), accessed in 28/1/2016.

<sup>26</sup> Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nighmares in Ancient Egypt*, 143.

<sup>27</sup> Asaad, Sleep in Ancient Egypt, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 41.

<sup>29</sup> A. M. Blackman, *Oracles in Ancient Egypt*, (JEA 11, 1925), 249-55; A. M. Blackman, *Oracles in Ancient Egypt*, (JEA 12, 1926), 176-85.

<sup>30</sup> Solaiman, *Dreams in the beliefs of ancient Egyptians*, 102

<sup>31</sup> Asaad., Sleep in Ancient Egypt, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 28-35; Solaiman, *Dreams in the beliefs of ancient Egyptians*, 102

<sup>33</sup> Solaiman, *Dreams in the beliefs of ancient Egyptians*, 61.

the Greco-Roman period attached to temples). They were dedicated to the healing god Aesclepius, who took over the role of Imhotep. Temples have been found in Saqqara, Dendera, Abydous, Edfu, and Philae.<sup>34</sup> While, the temple of Amun at Siwa was not recorded as sleep temple in Ancient Egypt, it was known as “the Oracle temple”. “Oracle” in Ancient Egypt is the broad umbrella term that includes oracle, prophecy, and dream incubation.<sup>35</sup>

The earliest evidence of dream incubation dates back to a Ramesside stele.<sup>36</sup> The best known example of dream incubation is that of the wife of Kha-m-was, the son of Ramesse II. She asked the help of the goddess Mrt-Sdgr to achieve her wish of getting pregnant, in addition to the help of Sekhet. The wife of Satni asked help for the same reason.<sup>37</sup> There is also an inscription found on a stele which can be traced back to the late New Kingdom and indicates that sleeping in temples was a popular practice among the inhabitants of the western Thebes. The temple of goddess Mert Sedr appears to have been the most popular site used in this region. The recorded diseases which had been cured by the dreams were fever, illusions, nightmares, sleep disorders, headaches, and blindness.<sup>38</sup> The sick person would often go to a priest or dream interpreter for dream interpretation.

## Dream Interpreters

Dream interpreters in Ancient Egypt were physicians, scribes, or low level priests who worked in the house of life<sup>39</sup>. A dream interpreter was usually a mixture of priest, physician, and magician. They were known as *rx-xt, knower of things*; or *sSpr-anx, scribe of the house of life*; or *rx-xt sS pr-anx, knower of things, scribe in the house of life*.<sup>40</sup> They were trained magic-users who were taught by greater priests and had access to the library of the house of life. There is an inscription in a stele in the Serapeum of Memphis which proudly declares that dream interpreter there was a Cretan. It is believed that perhaps dream specialists of various countries would come to the temples of Egypt to sell their services of dream interpretation during the Greco-Roman Period.<sup>41</sup> Dream interpretation was a kind of essential work for the priests in the sleep temple, or Sanatorium.<sup>42</sup>

Dream interpreters must have knowledge of certain information about the dreamers before they begin to interpret the dreams, such as place of birth, work history, medical history, marital status, and social class.<sup>43</sup> Dream interpreters usually used the dream book to interpret dreams. The papyrus, known as the Egyptian Dream Book, dated back to 1275 BC was found in a cache of documents in Der el-Medineh. This collection is listed on the papyrus known as Chester Beatty III. It most likely dates back to the reign of Ramesses II. It outlined a total of 227 dreams and their interpretation and comprised eleven columns of visions which were written vertically.<sup>44</sup> It was divided into three sections: dreams and its interpretations, spells against bad dreams, and Seth, followers and their dreams.<sup>45</sup> All dreams were listed as good or bad, with the bad dreams written in red.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>34</sup> S. Abde-Wahab, Revival of Medical Tourism Based on Cultural Heritage through Establishing the Therapeutic Asclepia, Journal of Tourism and Hotels, , vol.9, 2/1, (Fayoum University, 2015), 104.

<sup>35</sup> A. H. Nureldin, Ancient Egyptian Religion, (Priesthood and religious rituals), (Cairo, 2010), 358.

<sup>36</sup> Szpakowska, *Dream Interpretation in the Ramasid Age*, 516.

<sup>37</sup> Solaiman, *Dreams in the beliefs of ancient Egyptians*, 61.

<sup>38</sup> Solaiman, *Dreams in the beliefs of ancient Egyptians*, 172-174.

<sup>39</sup> The House of Life was defined by Assman as the center of cultural endeavor to preserve and ensure the ongoing progress of cosmic, political, and social life, J. Assman, *The Mind of Egypt*, (New York, 2003), 73.

<sup>40</sup> Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 40-41.

<sup>41</sup> G. Roeder, *Kulte Orakel und Naturverehrung im alten Ägypten* (Die ägyptische Religion in Texten und Bildern 3, ( Zurich, 1960), 14.

<sup>42</sup> Abde-Wahab, Revival of Medical Tourism, 107.

<sup>43</sup> Solaiman, *Dreams in the beliefs of ancient Egyptians*, 172.

<sup>44</sup> A. G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs*, Oxford University Press, (New York, 1999), 110-111.

<sup>45</sup> Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams and Nightmares in Ancient Egypt*, 74.

<sup>46</sup> A. H. Gardiner and D. Litt, editors. Hieratic papyri in the British museum, 3rd series: Chester Beatty gift, Vol. I. Text, No. III (Brit.Mus.10683), Plates 5-12a, Recto, The Dream Book), British Museum, ( London, 1935), 7-23.

## Health Tourism

Health tourism has proven to be a growing market in recent years; it is defined by Helmy<sup>47</sup> as “travelling for a wide range of health and well-being purposes”. Large numbers of people are now travelling across borders from rich countries to developing countries in order to receive relatively cheap medical care, therapeutic procedures, and other forms of treatment.<sup>48</sup> This type of travel is known as medical tourism. Hospitals and health care institutions across the world have been expanding in order to receive more international patients.<sup>49</sup> This is different than health tourism, where travelers choose to visit places for the well-being of body as well as mind.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, health tourism encompasses medical and therapeutic tourism.<sup>51</sup> Recently, health tourism also included phenomena ranging from naturism to meditation.<sup>52</sup> Wellness tourism is also a subset of health tourism, where tourists travel seeking unique places to engage in health activities that are located in authentic locations that are not available at home. Hence, wellness tourists are different in their motivation to travel than medical tourists. Interestingly, wellness tourists are called “guests” who are seeking experiences, while medical tourists are called “patients” who are seeking constructed outcomes and therapies.<sup>53</sup> Figure (1) shows the wellness tourism and medical tourism market spectrum, ranging from authentic “location-based” experiences to standardized, “generic” experiences.



Fig. (1) Wellness tourism and medical tourism market spectrum.

<sup>47</sup> E. Helmy, Benchmarking the Egyptian medical tourism sector against international best practices: an exploratory study, (TOURISMOS, 2011) , 6 (2): 293-311.

<sup>48</sup> N. Lunt, R. Smith, M., Exworthy, S., Green, D. Horsfall, and R. Mannion, Medical Tourism: Treatments, Markets and Health System Implications: A scoping review, (OECD, 2017) available from <https://www.oecd.org/els/health-systems/48723982.pdf>, accessed on 21-04-2017.

<sup>49</sup> J. Munro, (What is medical tourism?, Best practices of medical tourism, Medical Travel Quality Alliance (MTQUA, 2012), available from: <http://inc.iiime.com/SiteThemes/2012/IMTECH/downloads/MedicalTravelQualityMTQUA.pdf> accessed on 15-04-2017.

<sup>50</sup> P. Carrera and N. Lunt, A European perspective on medical tourism: the need for a knowledge base, (International Journal of Health Services, 2010), 40, 469-84.

<sup>51</sup> Munro, What is medical tourism?

<sup>52</sup> J. Connell, Medical Tourism, (Sydney University, 2011) , 1; F. Haq, and A. Medhekar, *Spiritual Tourism between India and Pakistan: A Framework for Business Opportunities and Threats*, (World Journal of Social Sciences, 2012), 5. no.2. 190-200.

<sup>53</sup> Global Wellness Institute, *Wellness tourism and medical tourism, where do spas fit?*, (2011), Global Spa Summit, available from: [http://www.globalspaandwellnesssummit.org/images/stories/pdf/spas\\_wellness\\_medical\\_tourism\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.globalspaandwellnesssummit.org/images/stories/pdf/spas_wellness_medical_tourism_report_final.pdf) accessed on 11-04-2017.

Source: (Global Wellness institute, 2011)

Therapeutic tourism can also include different types of interest-based tourism, where people may travel to partake in therapeutic sea bathing, for example. This type of travel was popular with the upper-class during in the eighteenth century.<sup>54</sup> Special interest tourism is also a leisure-travel industry, where the tourist’s own interests determine the destination selections.<sup>55</sup> A special interest tourist is most often middle-aged, high-income, educated, and seems to desire a longer stay than most tourists. Special interest tourists often have a spirit of adventure, curiosity, and a desire to share the experience with others. They also enjoy activities related to nature and heritage.<sup>56</sup>

### Dream Incubation Tourism

“Dream incubation” is a practice in which a person performs a ritual act and then sleeps in a sacred place, with the deliberate intention of receiving a dream.”<sup>57</sup>

Based on this definition, this study defines Dream incubation tourism as “travelling to sacred places (i.e. temples, churches, mosques) to perform certain ritual before sleeping in such sacred places, either for the purpose of invoking dreams as a kind of alternative medical therapy or as a kind of pleasant spiritual experience”. According to the previous definition, dream incubation tourism can be explained in relation to two concepts: (1) health tourism, when the aim is to use dreams as a form of therapy to cure certain psychological diseases, and (2) special-interest tourism, where tourists seek the authentic experience of sleeping in temples (Figure 2).

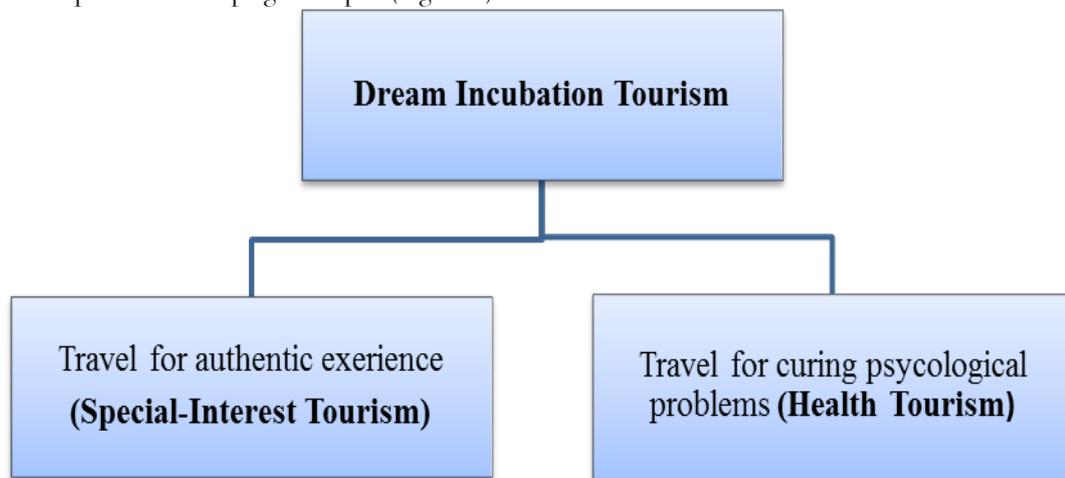


Fig. (2) Dream incubation tourism classification by purpose.

Countries such as Egypt, Greece, Italy, India, China, and Tibet are much more likely to develop this type of tourism. Each of these countries has a remote ancient heritage of dream incubation. The current study will focus on exploring opportunities of Dream Incubation tourism in Siwa Oasis, located in Egypt; the study will focus particularly on the Oracle temple, where the place possess significant characteristics in relation to the resurrection of sleep temples.

### Siwa Oasis

Siwa Oasis is located in the western desert of Egypt, on the edge of the Great Sand Sea. Siwa is home to the famous oracle of Amun. Alexander the great made a famous visit to the oracle temple in early 331 BC. Its remoteness is extreme, and it has been referred to as “Santariya” by Arabic writers.<sup>58</sup>

The oasis has many olive and palm groves fed by many natural springs. The water in these springs is divided into three types:

<sup>54</sup> B. Mckercher and A. Chan, How Special Is Special Interest Tourism?, (Journal of Travel Research, Sage Publications, 2005), 44, 21-31,

<sup>55</sup> J. K. MacKay, Special interest tourism, tourism encyclopedia, (Ryerson University, Springer, 2016), 893-894.

<sup>56</sup> D. Kruja, and A. Gjyrezi, The Special Interest Tourism Development and the Small Regions, (TURIZAM, 201), 15, 2, 77-89.

<sup>57</sup> Harrison, The classical Greek practice of incubation, 1.

<sup>58</sup> R. Bangall, and D. Rathborne. *Egypt from the Alexander to the Early Christiens*, The J. Paul Getty Museum, (Los Anglos., 2014), 271.

normal hot water, normal cold water, and sulfurous hot water, which is used internationally in curing many skin problems. It is also used in curing some respiratory diseases. Siwa is famous for its hot white sand that has cured many people of arthritis and spinal pain. Dakroul Mountain, also located in Siwa, contains some radiations that help in curing rheumatism, polio, Psoriasis, and digestive illnesses.<sup>59</sup>

In Siwa, the intense desert winds have carved reliefs from the plateaus, resulting in a landscape where the Great Sand Sea mingles with water springs, salt lakes, and significant biodiversity (Fig. 3). Siwa Oasis has a unique cultural heritage and a society rich in native customs and traditions. Siwi people share more with cultures to its west (Libya) than with Egypt, as they are descendants of the Berbers, or Imazighen. Siwa is the most eastern point of the Berber culture, and the oasis features, traditions, dress, tools, and a language distinct from the other oases of Egypt's Western Desert.<sup>60</sup>

## Oracle Temple

The plateau of Aghurmi is where the famous temple of the oracle (Fig.4) is located. It is 30 meters above sea level. The temple of the oracle was built during the 26th Dynasty. Around the temple, there is a mud brick mosque dating from the Islamic period and a village no longer inhabited. The temple was built by Greek workers and for the most part dates back to the pre-Hellenistic times. Although the god Amun was Egyptian, the cult at Siwa was partly Libyan.<sup>61</sup>

The facade of the temple is easily distinguished because there are no inscriptions. The facade leads to an interior of two large halls and a sanctuary with an entrance on the main axis. In the first court, there are two niches in the southern wall. At floor level in the west wall, there is an entrance to a crypt. The second court is almost the same size as the first, but was built a little higher. There are three entrances in the north wall of the second court, of which the middle and larger one leads to the sanctuary (Fig.5). The small entrance to the right, only 80 centimeters wide, leads to a narrow corridor (Fig.6), which perhaps was used to assist in delivering the oracles. In the left wall of the corridor, there are three elevated niches, as well as two holes for light near the ceiling. Fakhry wondered whether this might have been a secret area from which the priests could speak the words of the Oracle. Only the sanctuary has walls that are inscribed. It was once roofed over and the walls have been badly damaged.<sup>62</sup>



*Fig. (3) Siwa Oasis,*  
Source (*Matrouh Governorate, 2017*)

<sup>59</sup> E. Nofal, *Towards Management and Preservation of Egyptian Cultural Landscape Sites – Case Study: Siwa Oasis*, in the 5th International Congress “Science and Technology for the Safeguard of Cultural Heritage in the Mediterranean Basin” 22nd – 25th November 2011, Istanbul, Turkey.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Bangall, and Rathborne, *Egypt from the Alexander to the Early Christians*, 272.

<sup>62</sup> A. Fakhry, *Siwa Oasis*, (Cairo, American University Press, 1973), 147-152.



*Fig. (4) Oracle temple of Amun*



*Fig. (5) the Sanctuary*



*Fig. (6) the secret corridor*

## **Methodology**

This exploratory study used three different focus groups in 2016 to discuss and investigate possible opportunities for resurrecting dream incubation tourism at the Oracle Temple in Siwa. The aim was to explore the general attitude toward the revival of Ancient Egyptian cultural heritage with an emphasis on the revival of sleep temples.

No	Group (1)	Group (2)	Group (3)
Participants	Five Tourism officers One Egyptian psychiatrist Three tourist guides	One British academic expert One German academic expert Six Egyptian Academic experts	One hotel owner Three Siwan citizens One travel agency manager an Egyptian psychiatrist one tourism investor one archeology inspector Three French Tourists
Place	Egyptian Authority, Tourism Cairo	Minia University, Minia	A hotel meeting room, Siwa Oasis
Duration	50 minutes	44 minutes	54 minutes

Table (1) Characteristics of the focus groups used for the study

The discussions started with engaging questions in order to put the participants at ease and make them comfortable with the following topic exploration. The discussions ended with exit questions to ensure that nothing was missed.<sup>63</sup>

The questions were focused of the following issues:

- Attitudes towards the revival of Ancient Egyptian culture heritage
- The experience of sleep temples in relation to health and special-interest tourism
- Dream incubation tourism model
- Strengths and possible challenges of dream incubation tourism

Participants were nominated on the basis of their initial awareness about the study and the possibility of getting involved in applications. Focus groups' discussions were recorded and were then transcribed and arranged to locate patterns and themes for further exploration to help in the application of the current study.<sup>64</sup> (Berkowitz, 1997).

## Results and discussion

In focus group discussions, participants indicated that the resurrection of Ancient Egyptian sleep temples and dream therapy at the Siwa Oasis is an interesting idea that may result in increasing tourism demand. This has the potential to bring economic benefits and provide jobs within the local communities. The discussions resulted in developing a suggested model for dream incubation.

### Dream incubation tourism model

A model of four components was suggested as a starting point for developing dream incubation tourism in the Oracle Temple in Siwa. These are: the location, the dreamer, the incubation rite, and other stakeholders (Fig. 7).

#### The location

The chosen location of the Oracle of God Amun (i.e. Amun Temple) lies in an unpolluted environment occupied by few people. It is considered a suitable place as a starting point for incubation rite with the possibility of using virtual 3D simulation.

<sup>63</sup> Eliot & Associate how to conduct a focus group, (2005), available from: [https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/documents/How\\_to\\_Conduct\\_a\\_Focus\\_Group.pdf](https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/documents/How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group.pdf) accessed on 17-03-2016.

<sup>64</sup> S. Berkowitz, analyzing qualitative data. In J Frechtling, L. Sharp and Westat (Eds), User friendly handbook for mixed methods evaluation, (1997) available from: [www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/REC/pubs/NSF97-153/CHAP-4.html](http://www.ehr.nsf.gov/EHR/REC/pubs/NSF97-153/CHAP-4.html) accessed on 30-03-2016.

Dreamers could also stay in the Dream Therapy Medical Resort, located near the Oracle Temple and the water springs. Such a resort can be transformed to provide the dream incubation experience.

## **The dreamer**

The non-traditional tourist is the target of dream incubation tourism. Visitors, or dreamers, will be exposed to a unique and authentic experience from the past, and get a chance to test their ability of taking risks by spending the night in an ancient temple after getting certain amount of preparation. Moreover, the tourist may be able to find a cure for some psychological pain or sleep disorder through the dream therapy.

## **The incubation rite**

The incubation rite refers to sleeping in the temple, after certain preparations, with the hope of invoking dreams. These dreams will later be interpreted. This may help in healing certain symptoms. It includes the preparation of the dreamer by preventing certain food and beverages, in addition to avoiding sexual relations for a number of days. Additionally, the tourist should be purified by different material, including oils and perfumes, incense, and water. The potential tourist should be mentally relaxed and well prepared for the experience.

After being prepared for the dream incubation experience for at least three days, dreamers will enter the temple on the fourth day to enjoy the simulation and to sleep in the temple for a few hours after the sunset. The 3D virtual simulation will display the procedures of the Ancient Egyptian dream incubation with the appropriate sound, music, lighting, and smell effects. This display will be similar to Egyptian Oracle Project<sup>65</sup> or to the sound and light in the Pyramid and in the Karnak Temple. After the simulation, the dreamer will sleep on a special mattress in the sanctuary where there will be incense with a special relaxing substance to help them sleep quietly for a few hours in the sanctuary. The accompanied guide and the psychiatrist will be watching the dreamer from a hidden room attached to the sanctuary which originally was used by the Ancient priests to control the Oracle mater.

## **Other Stakeholders**

Tour guides from local communities can be trained to guide dreamers during their experience in the world of dreams. Such local tour guides should get initial training in dream therapy and meditation. Stakeholders could also be dream interpreters, hospitality staff, and psychiatrists. All people involved in the dream incubation experience will be required to dress in the Ancient Egyptian style. In addition, the staff must use tools, instruments, perfumes, and music according to the Ancient Egyptian style in order to meet visitors' expectations of having an authentic experience.

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<sup>65</sup> R. Gillam and J. Jacobson, the Egyptian Oracle Project, *Ancient Ceremony in Augmented Reality*, (London, 2015), Bloomsbury Academic., 211-216.

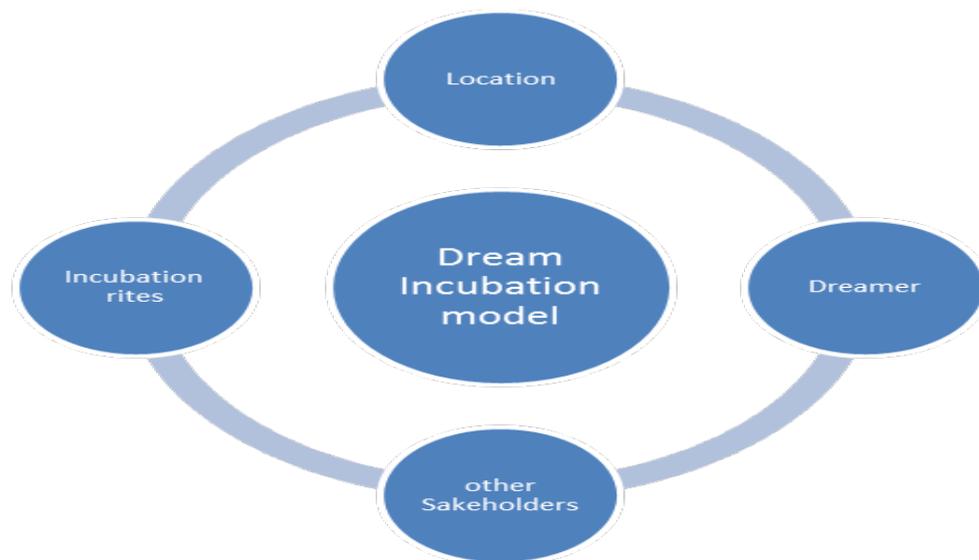


Fig. (7) Dream Incubation suggested model

## Dream incubation experience

The experience itself could be divided into two stages; stage one where visitors get a short educational course about the history of dreams, dream therapy, incubation rites, oracles, sleep temples, dream books, and dream interpretation history in Ancient Egypt. The second stage is the real experience of dream incubation, and uses dream therapy for meditation and healing issues, such as sleep disorders where all means of modern technology will not be allowed.

Going to sacred places, such as mosques and churches, or visiting the graves of religious people asking for healing from diseases or for meditation and the purification of the soul is a common practice in Egypt. The origin of this practice is found to be related to the sleep temples and dream incubation in Ancient Egypt. Visitors who travel for such purposes are called “worshippers”; most of them come from the United States, Germany and the UK. They mainly visit places such as Tell El-Amarna, Luxor and Aswan. They are thought to be high-income visitors and require a high level of privacy with special tour guides who offer a high level of privacy to visitors.

The use of 3D virtual simulation in the temple could possibly represent an interesting part of the visitors’ experience. However, it is important to raise visitors’ awareness that it is not guaranteed that a dream will result, but they are guaranteed to get the complete Ancient Egyptian atmosphere and preparation for dream incubation.

Alternative medicine like sleep therapy is known in many parts of the world, and many tourists from different countries are looking for this type of treatment.<sup>66</sup>In Egypt, there is the well-known Institute of Psychiatry-Psychophysiology and Sleep Research Unit, located at Ain Shams University Hospital. The staff could be of help if consultation is needed in relation to dream therapy.

The suggested duration for the tour is five days; three days could be used in relaxation and preparation in the medical resorts and tourist school before sleeping in the temple on the fourth day. The fifth day could be used for group therapeutic sessions conducted by the psychiatrists in the resort, as well as relaxation in the warm water springs.

## Challenges of Dream incubation Tourism

While group discussions started generally with a positive attitude towards Dream Incubation Tourism, participants highlighted the challenges that may be faced to start this type of tourism. One of the first challenges is *Security*; focus group participants were concerned about spending the night in ancient temple. It was suggested that visitors could be encouraged to sleep only the few hours, from sunset to the midnight, or sleep eight hours during the day (as long as the sanctuary is roofed and dark). This could be discussed with the psychiatrists during the preparation day.

<sup>66</sup> M. K. Smith and L. Puezko, *Health and Wellness Tourism*, (Oxford, 2009), 234-237.

Another highlighted challenge was the *Lack of professionals*; participants indicated that it might be difficult to get trained staff in the area. This is also referred to by Helmy<sup>67</sup> when she discussed the lack of *professional* specialized human resources to work in health tourism centers in Egypt. However, involved stakeholders could be provided with a special training course that would facilitate hiring initial professional staff.

Participants also indicated that *online marketing* for health tourism in Egypt generally is not good enough<sup>68</sup> and they were concerned about promotion for Dream Incubation tourism. It was suggested that competitive online promotion for sleep temples could start as early as possible during the initial stage of training, so that no time would be wasted.

Siwi people were concerned that the promotion of such tourism could bring more visitors to Siwa, which may result in *uncontrolled tourism development*. They indicated that the current level of visitors could be helpful for figuring out the potential capacity of location at the Siwa Oasis.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

Ancient Egyptians were advanced in sleep medicine; they linked sleep to death and afterlife as they were experts in dream interpretation. Ancient Egyptians also used sleep temples to heal people from different types of medical problems, especially psychological pain. These sanctuaries/temples were called "Sleep (Dream Incubation) Temples." Those temples were found in Saqqara, Dendera, Abydous, Deir el-Madina, Edfu, and Philae. Dream incubation is the practice of sleeping in a temple for the purpose of dreaming or healing certain symptoms. The earliest evidence of dream incubation dates back to the Ramesside period. The most famous gods and goddess related to therapeutic dreams in the New Kingdom were Meret-Sedgr, Thoth, Bes, and Isis; while in the Greco-Roman Period the most famous gods and goddesses were Hathor, Serapis, Isis, and Defied Imhotep (or Esculapio).

Sleep temples are considered an idea that could be marketed to niche tourists, who will be looking for either using it as a therapy practice or even as a new adventure or spiritual experience inspired by the Ancient Egyptian intangible heritage explored at the Siwa Oasis.

Findings show that there is a need to qualify and develop professionals in relation to Dream Incubation Tourism to serve as a starting point for this type of Health Tourism in Egypt. Educational and training sources and programs could be identified and prepared by special tour guides in Siwa who are aware of the Ancient Egyptian sleep temple experience. The findings of this study also highlight the important role of all possibly involved stakeholders in the restoration of the Ancient Egyptian intangible heritage by planning carefully for getting such experience out in the open and promoting it to the proper tourism market segments. This type of initial marketing research could be undertaken by Egyptian Tourism officers in the Egyptian Ministry. However, this could be done while taking into consideration the carrying capacity issues, allowing tourism development and visitor numbers to remain under control.

In addition, there is a need for a competitive online marketing platform for health tourism in Egypt generally, and Dream Incubation Tourism particularly, which would allow Egypt to get more recognition within the international market of Health Tourism. Perhaps mapping potential spots that would be appropriate for the revival of Ancient Egyptian heritage could help in putting a good online marketing strategy together for such places. These places could potentially represent sports heritage in Beni Hassan, astronomical heritage in Dendera, medical heritage in Edfu, festival heritage in Luxor, and meditation heritage in Tell El- Amarna.

The process of developing Dream Incubation Tourism in Egypt requires the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, such as tourism marketing experts, transportation and resort managers, psychiatry experts, environmentalists, architects, meditation experts, tour guides, local community members, investors, and the decision makers within the local governments.

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<sup>67</sup> Helmy, Benchmarking the Egyptian medical tourism sector, 293-311.

<sup>68</sup> Helmy, Benchmarking the Egyptian medical tourism sector, 293-311.

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