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For Immediate Release

Evidence of an Ancient Tsunami Unearthed in Alexandria Excavation

In a groundbreaking discovery during the autumn 2023 excavation period at Shallalat Gardens of Alexandria, a joint effort between the Hellenic Research Institute of Alexandrian Civilization and the National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics (NRIAG) has revealed compelling evidence of an ancient tsunami.

The excavation unearthed an energy layer beneath the granite stones of a Roman road dating back to the late 4th to early 5th century AD. This layer, located south of the foundation base of a monumental Hellenistic building discovered years ago, contained an abundance of fish bones, bones from a large sea fish, coral reef fragments, and a significant number of sea shells.

Notably, the foundation base appeared disproportionate for a standard construction, indicating it might have supported a remarkably tall and large building. Samples collected by NRIAG experts were subjected to radio-carbon14 testing, revealing dates ranging from 326 to 424 AD.

This timeframe aligns with historical records of a devastating tsunami on the 21st of July 365 AD, as documented by the 4th-century writer Ammianus Marcellinus. Marcellinus detailed a tsunami triggered by an earthquake near the island of Crete, flooding coasts, claiming over 50,000 lives, and leaving ships atop buildings in Alexandria, resulting in widespread destruction.

Contrary to skepticism regarding the historical accuracy of this event, the Shallalat Gardens excavation provides tangible proof of the significant destruction Alexandria endured during the 4th century AD. The site's proximity to the shore, approximately 800 meters, coupled with the presence of an energy layer laden with sea remnants and the collapse of the monumental Hellenistic construction, substantiates the historical catastrophe.

This revelation underscores the vulnerability of the Egyptian coast to such natural disasters in the past. This emphasizes the need for thorough study and preventive measures to mitigate the impact of future incidents.

The Hellenic Research Institute of the Alexandrian Civilization (H.R.I.A.C.) is a non-profit organization headquartered in Athens, with an annex in Alexandria. Dedicated to the archaeological research of Hellenic culture beyond Greece, specifically the Hellenistic Alexandrian period, H.R.I.A.C. has conducted excavations in the Shallalat Gardens of Alexandria since 2007.

The National Research Institute of Astronomy and Geophysics (NRIAG) has been a house of expertise since 1839, specializing in earth and universe observation. With an illustrious legacy, NRIAG has been at the forefront of groundbreaking research. Renowned for its expertise, the institute is a leader in conducting meticulous studies on natural disasters and pioneering risk evaluation methodologies. NRIAG's enduring commitment to advancing scientific knowledge cements its pivotal role in the field.











