

The Tagebücher [Journals] of the Architectural Survey

The Architectural Survey of the University of Chicago excavated Medinet Habu from 1926 through 1932. The field director, Uvo Hölscher, kept meticulous notes on the excavations for the 1927–1932 seasons. These notes, known as the Tagebücher [journals], were recorded primarily in German in four notebooks. They contain valuable information that formed Hölscher’s conclusions that were published in five volumes in the series *The Excavation of Medinet Habu* (1934–1954).

Notes to the Physical Documents

The journals consist of four uniform softbound notebooks recording the excavations at Medinet Habu by the Architectural Survey of the University of Chicago from October 18, 1927 to March 15, 1931. The preliminary season of clearance from December 1926 through February 1927 is not recorded in the journals, and the final season (October 14, 1931–March 1, 1932) is documented by a single entry in volume 3, page 41. Volume 4 contains notes on archaeological and architectural details written in 1932–33 after the excavation concluded. Most of the entries were written by Hölscher, and volumes 1 and 2 were written entirely in his hand.

The tan cover of each notebook is imprinted “Medinet Habu” with the volume number in black ink. Each book measures 28.5 x 22 cm, and each had fifty pages in triplicate.¹ The first sheet is lined, the second is thin onionskin paper, and the third is the same weight as sheet 1, but unlined.

The notebooks were in the possession of Field Director Uvo Hölscher at the conclusion of the excavation, and he took them to his home in Hannover, Germany as a reference for writing his final publications.² He taught at the Hannover Technical Institute (later, the University of Hannover). Hölscher died in 1963. In 1972, during renovations at the university, the notebooks and additional field records were discovered and given to the Hölscher family. In March 1993, Uvo Hölscher, the grandson of the

¹ The printed pagination of volume 4 was incorrect, and page 18 is missing.

² *The Excavation of Medinet Habu*, volumes 1–5 (Chicago, 1934–1954).

excavator, donated them to the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (formerly the Oriental Institute).³

Organization of the Digital Journals

Each journal has two files. “Tagebuch #” is the original scan and its German transcription. “Notebook #” is the original scan with its English translation. These files can be downloaded and put into “two page view” for the most accessible reading option.

Summary of Contents

Tagebuch 1: 1927–28 season

- October 18, 1927–March 17, 1928

Tagebuch 2: 1927–28 (continued) and 1928–29 seasons

- The end of the 1927–28 season (March 19–April 7, 1928) are recorded on pp. 51–54

Tagebuch 3: 1929–30, 1930–31, and 1931–32 seasons.

- Includes excerpts from Steckeweh’s Journal [*Tagebuch*] (pp. 42–50)

Tagebuch 4: Notes on architecture written at Chicago House in 1932–33

- The text (in Hölscher’s hand) is titled “Winter 1932/33. This was written after the conclusion of the fieldwork when Hölscher was still living at Chicago House while he worked on the publications.⁴

A Note on the Translation

Hölscher’s handwriting, although in Latin script, is very difficult to decipher. This was noted decades ago with the preparation of *The Excavation of Medinet Habu* volumes that were translated in Chicago from handwritten manuscripts. This difficulty is evident in that it took Diederika Seele three years to translate and edit the text for *Excavation 2*,⁵ and there are several letters of complaints in the 1940s and 1950s from Hölscher about the translation process under Elizabeth B. Hauser of the Institute’s publications

³ John Noble Wilford, “Long Lost Notebooks of Egyptian Expedition,” *The New York Times*, May 10, 1994; E. Teeter, “More Medinet Habu Records Recovered,” *Oriental Institute News & Notes* 142 (Summer, 1994), 7.

⁴ Hölscher continued to stay at Chicago House through the 1935–1936 season (Hölscher to J. Wilson, February 6, 1936). [Hölscher letters, p. 1035]

⁵ Hölscher to John Wilson, September 3, 1937. [Hölscher letters, p. 1035]

department, especially concerning *Excavation 4*.⁶ Another difficulty is the technical vocabulary referring to archaeological and architectural features and well as Hölscher's occasional use of archaic terms.

Prior to the present project, a translation (unknown to the present team) was done of volume 1. Although unsigned, it might be the work of Robert Wagner, an ISAC volunteer who worked with the previous archivist John Larson between 2004 and 2011 and who scanned the notebooks in 2007. The present translation and transcriptions were done in 2021–2022 by Anne Schumacher and Barbara Schubeler Jillson and edited by Emily Teeter as part of ongoing research on the work of the Architectural Survey and the Epigraphic Survey.⁷

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⁶ Hölscher to Elizabeth Hauser, July 4, 1941. [Hölscher letters, p. 1270]

⁷ We thank Anne Flannery, ISAC Archivist, for proofreading and editing and Apollo El-Khatib, Archives Assistant, for formatting the scans and translation and transcriptions. We also thank Peter Raulwing for his assistance with the intricacies of the German language.