

EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY

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This year's field season of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt began on October 15, 2022, and concluded on April 15, 2023. Based at Chicago House, Luxor, the Survey team continued our documentation, conservation, and restoration projects at the sites of Medinet Habu, Luxor Temple, and Khonsu Temple in Karnak, as well as the excavation and documentation of Theban Tomb (TT) 107 in the western necropolis. Our work at each of these sites, carried out with permission from the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) and the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), is summarized below.

MEDINET HABU

At Medinet Habu, the Epigraphic Survey staff pressed forward with epigraphic documentation of various parts of the temple complex. In the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Amun, our artists and epigraphers worked on the facsimile drawing and collation of scenes to be published in *Medinet Habu* volume XI, including inscriptions of the Twentieth, Twenty-First, Twenty-Fifth, and Twenty-Ninth Dynasties added to the exterior of the temple, as well as on drawings for *Medinet Habu* XII, the New Kingdom and Ptolemaic reliefs in the central bark shrine, and *Medinet Habu* XIII, the reliefs and inscriptions of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty pylon and the Late Period portico. Our forthcoming publication of the Thutmosid peripteros and facade, *Medinet Habu* X, is now in press (fig. 1).

Concurrently, our photographic team coordinated to provide the large-format film documentation for each of these components of our publication series. In addition, we continued our comprehensive photographic documentation of the tomb chapels of the God's Wives of Amun (Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Dynasties), which is now nearly complete (fig. 2); these large-format negatives (fig. 3) will provide the basis for our facsimile drawings of the monuments in future seasons. On the far side of the Medinet Habu temenos, we continued the photographic and epigraphic recording of blocks from the destroyed Western High Gate of Ramesses III (fig. 4); facsimile renderings of the decorated fragment groups, incorporated into larger architectural reconstructions (fig. 5), are now well advanced.

This year the Survey's conservation and restoration teams continued our USAID-funded site management and development program within the Medinet Habu precinct. Restoration of the paved sandstone walkway surrounding the great mortuary temple of Ramesses III (fig. 6), a large-scale endeavor begun in 2015, was completed this season, along with capping of the adjoining mudbrick enclosure walls and structures of the royal administrative complex (fig. 7). Visitors to Medinet Habu will now have unhindered access to the temple's exterior wall reliefs via this authentically reconstructed ancient processional route.

To the north of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple, our stonemasons finished dismantling the Taharqa Gate, also part of our USAID grant program. The blocks of this portal, decorated in raised relief, were carefully cleaned, treated, and consolidated by the conservation team (fig. 8), while a new, damp-coursed concrete foundation was laid and new sandstone blocks were carefully carved to replicate the disintegrated lower courses of the gate structure. The stonemasonry team began rebuilding the gate in January (fig. 9), and by mid-April the reconstruction had reached the halfway point; we expect to complete the restoration of this monument in 2024.

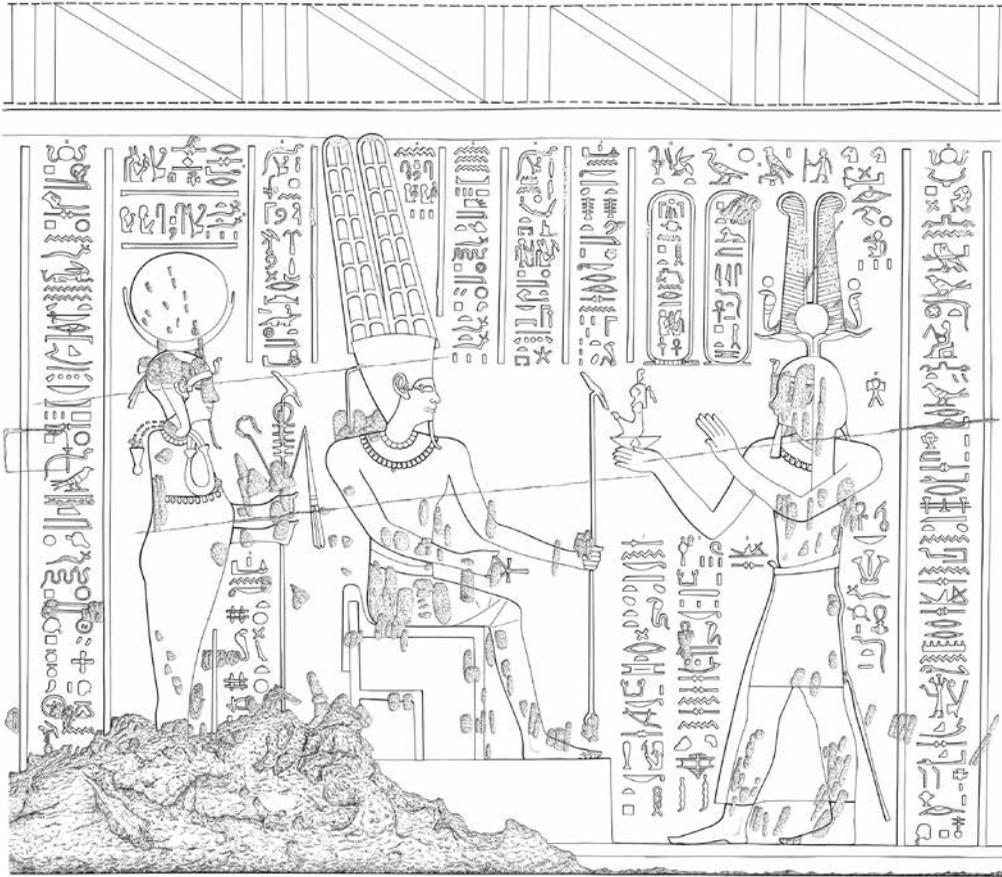


Figure 1. Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II presenting *Ma'at* to Amun and Khonsu, to be published in *Medinet Habu X* (forthcoming). Facsimile drawing by Margaret De Jong.



Figure 2. Amanda Tetreault photographing with large-format camera in the tomb chapels of the God's Wives of Amun. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.



Figure 3. Inscription in the tomb chapel of Amenirdis. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky and Amanda Tetreault.



Figure 4. Jen Kimpton testing a fragment joint at the Western High Gate. Photo by Sue Lezon.



Figure 5. Keli Alberts preparing a reconstruction drawing of the Western High Gate. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.



Figure 6. Stonemasonry team installing new sandstone paving block in the north sector of the Ramesses III mortuary temple. Photo by Frank Helmholz.



Figure 7. Conservation team restoring mudbrick walls at the northwest corner of the Ramesses III mortuary temple. Photo by Mohamed Abo el-Makarem.



Figure 8. Conservation team carrying out condition assessments of Tahrqa Gate blocks. Photo by Mohamed Abo el-Makarem.



Figure 9. Stonemasonry team reerecting blocks of the Tahrqa Gate. Photo by Mohamed Abo el-Makarem.

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Outside the Medinet Habu enclosure wall to the southeast, our conservators and stonemasons completed the reconstruction of the west jamb of the Claudius Gate (fig. 10), a USAID-funded project started in 2019. The ruined gate is now stabilized atop a solid concrete foundation, with newly carved sandstone blocks replacing the eroded original foundation stones. In conjunction with each of these restoration projects, we continued our training program for early-career Egyptian conservation professionals, providing instruction and hands-on practical experience in a wide range of conservation methods and techniques (fig. 11). We plan to continue this annual training program, started in 2005, during our upcoming field season and in the years to come.



Figure 10. Stonemasonry team reerecting blocks of the Claudius Gate. Photo by Brett McClain.



Figure 11. Safaa Saad Mohammed cleaning wall reliefs in the Eighteenth Dynasty temple of Amun at Medinet Habu. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky.

LUXOR TEMPLE

On the east bank of the Nile, we resumed our conservation and epigraphic documentation programs at Luxor Temple. Tagging and registration of the vast and heterogeneous collection of inscribed fragments stored in the temple blockyards continued this year (fig. 12), with nearly 20,000 fragments now registered in our ever-growing fragment database. We also continued conservation monitoring and assessment of a number of core fragment groups, including several groups for which we now have condition records extending over a period of more than twenty years, providing an ideal sample for analysis and evaluation of long-term treatment techniques. From October through December 2022, our team carried out photogrammetric documentation of a set of fragment groups stored at the south end of the blockyard, dating primarily to the reign of Amenhotep III. Since the start of this digital fragment documentation program in 2016, more than 8,000 inscribed pieces have been recorded with high-resolution orthophotographs. As this information is generated in the field, it is also being added to our electronic archives at Chicago House to serve as a research dataset for future analysis of the fragment corpus. During February and March 2023, our team also conducted a review of the open-air museum in the Luxor Temple blockyard. Inaugurated in 2010 with support from the World Monuments Fund, the installation will be refurbished and expanded next season, with new signage and additional fragment groups added to the display platforms.

Our photographers and epigraphic staff also proceeded with documentation of the standing wall remains in Luxor Temple itself. In the central Imperial Chamber, facsimile drawing of the heavily damaged third-century AD Roman frescos, which depict the four Tetrarchs and the Imperial court, is now complete, and this season our team moved on to photogrammetry and facsimile drawing of the underlying coronation scenes from the reign of Amenhotep III (fig. 13). These two chronological phases will be presented in our



Figure 12. Hala Mohammed Ahmed tagging inscribed fragments in the Luxor Temple blockyard. Photo by Brett McClain.



Figure 13. Krisztián Vértés drawing Amenhotep III wall reliefs in the Imperial Chamber of Luxor Temple. Photo by Dominique Navarro.

publication series as *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Luxor Temple III/1* and *III/2*, the first volume of which is now in preparation. In this central sector of the temple and within the monument's innermost chambers, we worked with the Zamani Project/Z&F, a research group affiliated with the University of Cape Town, to conduct a program of 3D laser scanning and architectural surveys that will provide a complete, three-dimensional map of the temple complex, which will be used to provide a spatially accurate framework for our ongoing epigraphic documentation program.

KHONSU TEMPLE

At Khonsu Temple within the precinct of Karnak, we resumed our documentation of the inscribed blocks and fragments reused in the structure of the Twentieth Dynasty monument. This program, originally carried out by our team in collaboration with the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) in 2008–14, had been reinitiated during our 2021–22 field season in conjunction with the ongoing ARCE restoration program on the site. Existing cracks in the walls and ceilings of the temple, which allow access to the decorated surfaces of hundreds of blocks taken from older monuments by Ramesses III's stonemasons, will be filled in as part of this restoration campaign, so it is critical that an epigraphic record of the ancient inscriptions be made beforehand. From January to March 2023, our team was able to record several dozen of these fragments using the foil-impression method that has proven to be the only effective technique for capturing the relief decoration on these hidden stones (fig. 14). We hope to continue this collaborative research effort with ARCE in 2023–24, and our growing record of the corpus of reused blocks from Khonsu Temple will ultimately be included as a volume in our *Temple of Khonsu* publication series.



Figure 14. Dominique Navarro taking foil impressions of reused fragments at Khonsu Temple. Photo by Brett McClain.

THEBAN TOMB 107

In February 2023, we resumed the clearance of TT 107, the tomb of Nefersekheru, in collaboration with our Australian colleagues from Macquarie University, Sydney, who generously provided their expertise in specialized archaeological techniques. The team expanded the excavation of the tomb's interior, which has never been fully explored, and a range of ceramics and other finds were retrieved from the stratified layers of flood debris that filled the columned hall and inner chambers in later antiquity. Moreover, several new fragments of finely carved limestone relief from the tomb's decoration were recovered (fig. 15), and during March they were conserved, photographed, and drawn by the Epigraphic Survey staff (fig. 16). Much work remains to be done, however, and we plan to continue the excavation and documentation of this Eighteenth Dynasty monument in 2024.



Figure 15. Brett McClain and Mohammed Youssef sorting inscribed fragments at TT 107. Photo by Sue Osgood.

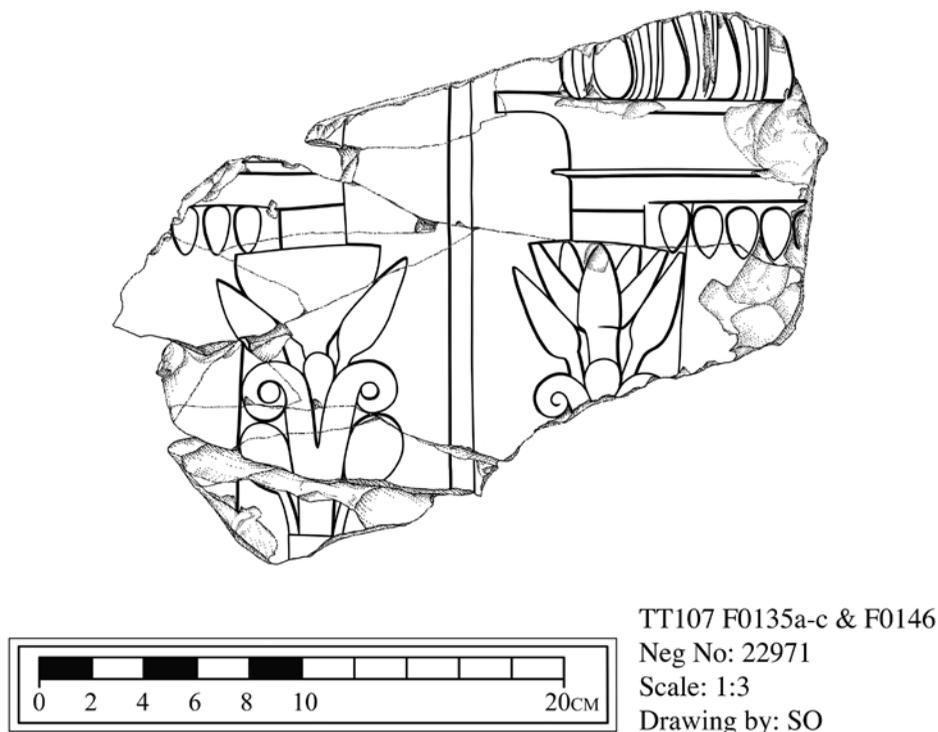


Figure 16. Reassembled group of inscribed fragments from the facade of TT 107. Facsimile drawing by Sue Osgood.

CHICAGO HOUSE

Our headquarters and residence at Chicago House serve as the base of operations for all our fieldwork during the annual six-month season. The day-to-day management of the facility is overseen by our capable administration and finance team, our experienced house manager and technicians, and our permanent cadre of skilled workmen. Our library and archives offer a wide range of research resources for the local archaeological community, including members of the MoTA/SCA, scholars and students from local universities, and researchers from the many foreign expeditions that work in the region of Luxor each autumn and winter. Our library staff not only organize and maintain the collections but also provide assistance to patrons when needed, and the photographic archives staff oversee and curate our ever-growing collection of large-format film negatives, digital and 3D images, and other documents. In preparation for the Epigraphic Survey's upcoming centennial anniversary, we are assembling a dossier of archival material that will form the basis for a commemorative volume, now in preparation, giving an in-depth history of the expedition; a special exhibition at the ISAC Museum; and other celebratory events planned for autumn 2024.

STAFF AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Epigraphic Survey professional staff for 2022–23 consisted of J. Brett McClain as field director; epigraphers Jennifer L. Kimpton, Emmanuelle Arnaudière, Aleksandra Hallmann, and Ariel Singer; Egyptologist/house manager Christina Di Cerbo; senior artists Margaret De Jong and Susan Osgood; artists Krisztián Vértés, Keli Alberts, and Dominique Navarro; senior photographer Yarko Kobylecky; photographer/photo archivist Susan Lezon; photo archives assistant Elinor Smith; assistant photographer/photo archivist Amanda Tetreault; digital archivist Alain Arnaudière; archaeologists Boyo Ockinga, Susanne Binder, and Kim McCorquodale (Macquarie University); digital photographers/photogrammetry specialists Owen Murray and Mariusz Caban; laser-scanning specialists Heinz Rütter, Christoph Held, and Bruce McDonald (Zamani Project/Z&F); project manager/data engineer Gina Salama; senior conservators Hiroko Kariya and Mohamed Abo el-Makarem; consultant conservators Stephen Rickerby and Lisa Shekede; master stonemason Frank Helmholz; assistant stonemason Johannes Weninger; head librarian Anait Helmholz; assistant librarian Martina Roshdy Maher; finance manager Essam el-Sayed; administrator Samir Guindy; and assistant administrator Samwell Maher. Our team of forty full-time skilled workmen and twenty-six seasonal workmen was supervised by the indispensable Rais Badawy Mohammed Abd el-Rahman. Emily Teeter has taken on the role of Epigraphic Survey historian to chronicle the first hundred years of our expedition for next year's centennial. We were fortunate to welcome Catie Witt and Rebecca Wang, graduate students in the University of Chicago's Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, as interns during the second half of our field season.

We are most grateful to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Supreme Council of Antiquities, in particular Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Mr. Ahmed Issa; former Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Dr. Khaled el-Enany; SCA Secretary General Dr. Mostafa Waziri; General Director of the Pharaonic Sector Dr. Ayman Ashmawy; General Director of Foreign Missions Dr. Nashwa Gaber; General Director of Antiquities in Luxor Dr. Fathy Yaseen; Gurna Inspectorate General Director Bahaa el-Din; Gurna Inspectorate Assistant Director Ezz ed-Din Kamal en-Nouby; Gurna Inspectorate Director of Foreign Missions Ramadan Ahmed Ali; Luxor Temple Director Ahmed Araby; and all our friends and colleagues in Egypt for another fruitful collaboration this year.

We also extend special thanks to the many friends of ISAC and Chicago House whose generous support has funded our preservation programs in Luxor. We are grateful to USAID mission director Leslie Reed; former USAID mission director Sherry Carlin; and USAID representatives Mohamed Abdel Rahman and Steven Sunderland Jr.; to Dr. Marjorie M. Fisher; David and Carlotta Maher†; O.J. and Angie

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We wish to express our enduring gratitude to USAID Egypt for the support of our documentation, conservation, restoration, and site management programs at Medinet Habu. For more than two decades, USAID-sponsored grant programs have been vital to the success of our fieldwork in the monumental sites of ancient Thebes.
