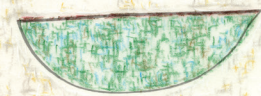


# News & Notes

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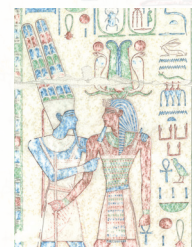
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ON THE COVER: Thutmose III received by Amun-Re, as repainted in the Ptolemaic period. Detail of plate 244 from *Medinet Habu X: The Eighteenth Dynasty Temple, Part II*, by the Epigraphic Survey (ISAC, 2024).



## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



One of the distinct pleasures (and privileges) I enjoy as director of ISAC is the opportunity to visit our researchers in the field. I have just returned from Luxor and our centennial celebration of the Epigraphic Survey of Egypt, and it was absolutely magical to spend time with the team working at Medinet Habu and Luxor Temple. It was a particular thrill to observe the multidisciplinary team of epigraphers, artists, photographers, and conservators come together to achieve the exacting documentation process, the so-called Chicago House Method, of the complex palimpsest of inscriptions that cover the walls and inner chambers of the Small Temple of Amun located within the vast grounds of Ramesses III's mortuary complex. Also magical was the captivation and excitement of our members and supporters as they listened to the epigraphic team explain the significance of each subtle epigraphic mark and image in documenting the dynamic record of this ancient monument's rich theological and religious history. It was a powerful demonstration

of the importance—and value—of the discursive process at the heart of the Epigraphic Survey's work, and a reflection of the best traditions in humanistic scholarly discourse and learning.

Emily Teeter recounts the extraordinary history of the Epigraphic Survey in this issue's lead piece. Her article is an excerpt from her new monograph, *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago*, and coincides with the ISAC Museum's current special exhibition, *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt*, which runs through March 23, 2025. The story is a colorful one, full of interesting personalities and historic moments, but it is also a compelling testament to the remarkable accomplishments of the scholarly community that comprised the Survey over the past century and their extraordinary determination and enduring commitment to their research mission. ISAC members are invited to join Emily for a two-part, members-only virtual book club discussion about *Chicago on the Nile* on January 8 and 29, 2025.

This issue also highlights the research of two of the newest members of ISAC's faculty. Derek Kennet, the inaugural Howard E. Hallengren Professor of Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States Archaeology, reports on his newly launched excavations at the medieval port of Suhar, in the Sultanate of Oman. As Derek notes, Suhar has the enviable distinction of being located on the Indian coast of one of the most beautiful countries in Arabia, with beaches, cafés, and fish restaurants, but it also sits strategically astride one of the important trade routes linking Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, and it played an outsized role in the early centuries of Islam (seventh to ninth centuries CE) during the expansion of maritime trade between the global economic superpowers of that time. We can expect news of future discoveries from this exciting new ISAC project.

I am also pleased to draw attention to this issue's faculty profile, which features Margaret Geoga, assistant professor of Egyptology. Maggie joined ISAC's faculty from Brown University (via a Mellon postdoctoral fellowship at the Wolf Humanities Center of the University of Pennsylvania), where she completed her doctoral studies. Maggie's research focuses on ancient Egyptian literature, scribal culture, textual transmission, and reception. Her current book project examines the transmission and reception of *The Teaching of Amenemhat*, an enigmatic Middle Egyptian poem. As Maggie relates, her interest in ancient Egypt began on childhood field trips to Chicago-area museums, including the ISAC Museum. We are therefore pleased to welcome her back to Chicago and look forward to her important work on ancient Egyptian literature and her contribution to the Institute's ongoing study of ancient Egyptian civilization.

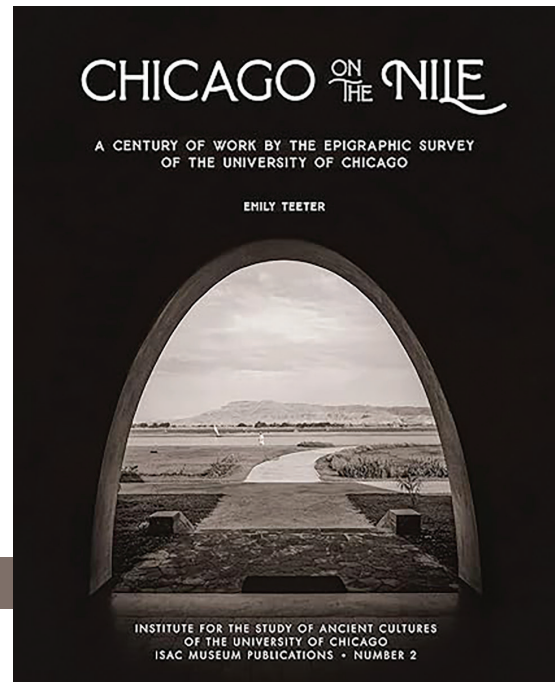
TIMOTHY HARRISON  
Director

# CHICAGO ON THE NILE

by Emily Teeter

The following article is an abridged and slightly adapted excerpt from Emily Teeter's new monograph, *Chicago on the Nile: A Century of Work by the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago*. Coinciding with the ISAC Museum's special exhibition *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt* (open through March 23, 2025), Teeter's book relates the colorful story of the University of Chicago's Epigraphic Survey expedition to Egypt, from its conception in 1924 by the first American Egyptologist, James Henry Breasted, through its development over the course of a century to become the major scientific and social presence it is today—and not just in Egypt but throughout the world.

The book can be purchased in the ISAC Museum Shop, which is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays and from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Fridays. ISAC members receive a 10 percent discount. The book may also be purchased online or downloaded for free as a PDF at [bit.ly/TeeterBook](http://bit.ly/TeeterBook). Members receive a 20 percent discount on online book purchases. For more information about the discounts, email Brad at [blenz@uchicago.edu](mailto:blenz@uchicago.edu).



The story of the earlier life of James Henry Breasted (1865–1935) (fig. 1) and his founding of the Oriental Institute has been told elsewhere, but the story of his Epigraphic Survey—now a hundred years old—bears examination.

Breasted's doctoral research and work on the Berlin Egyptian dictionary had entailed making accurate facsimile copies of texts in museums. That experience exposed him to what was possible, and with the unbounded enthusiasm of Americans at the turn of the twentieth century, he wrote, "I am now laying plans to copy not merely the historical, but all the inscriptions of Egypt and publish them." And only a few years later, with his 1905–7 epigraphic expedition to Nubia, he set out to do just that (figs. 2 and 3). He devised a process that integrated photography and collation, establishing the basic process that, to a large degree, is still followed today.

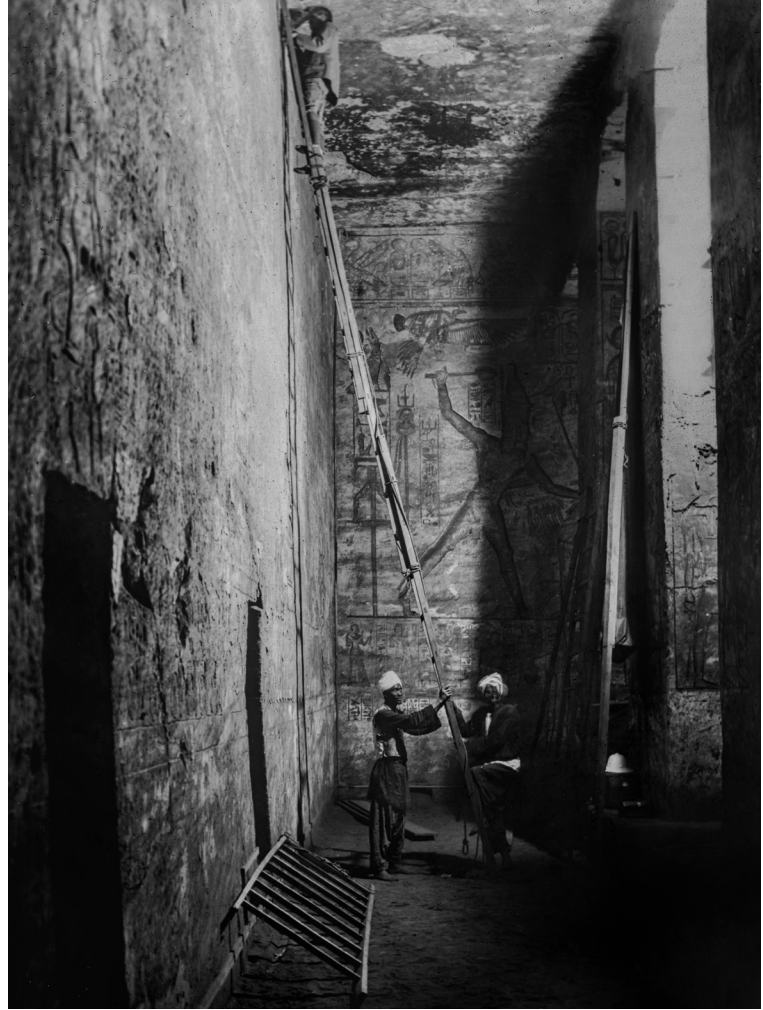
It is one thing to have bright and ambitious ideas. It is another entirely to be persistent and ingenious enough to fund and implement them. Breasted was especially gifted, for he had the rare combination of intellect and the ability to communicate the importance of his academic undertakings with clarity and enthusiasm to people who could help him reach his outsized goals. Inspiration was not the problem—as Breasted wrote in 1899, "The only possible thing which could interfere [with achieving my goals] would be the lack of money." Breasted was extremely fortunate to have formed a strong and lasting bond with John D. Rockefeller Jr., who, personally and through his foundations, was responsible for making possible most of Breasted's plans in Egypt, throughout the Middle East, and in Chicago. As Rockefeller wrote, "The contributions which I have

made to the Oriental Institute have been based partly on my interest in the field which it covers—largely because of my belief in you."

Breasted made no small plans. His first expedition, launched in 1905 on the occasion of only his second visit to the Nile Valley, set the goal of publishing all the historical texts on the monuments. It was followed by his 1922 collaboration with Alan H. Gardiner to make a "concerted attack" on copying the Coffin Texts in the Egyptian Museum with an international team that included Pierre Lacau, Ludlow Bull, Norman and Nina de Garis Davies, and Adriaan de Buck (fig. 4).

According to Breasted, he formulated his move to an even larger-scale undertaking of copying inscriptions in Thebes in 1923. As he recalled (in third person) about his involvement with the events a dozen years later,

it was at this time, while sitting in a wheel chair in the beautiful gardens of the Winter Palace [Hotel at Luxor], that he dictated a plan of campaign for the development of an epigraphic survey of the temples of Egypt, to begin with the great Medinet Habu temple opposite Luxor. This preliminary draft he sent to his former pupil and old friend, Dr. Harold H. Nelson, then head of the department of history in the American University of Beirut. The correspondence thus opened led shortly to a conference with Dr. Nelson in Cairo, on the Director's invitation; and in the course of a few weeks the project was more definitely developed and Dr. Nelson's adherence secured.



TOP LEFT: Figure 1. Breasted in his office in Haskell Hall at the University of Chicago, surrounded by publications, antiquities, and a plaster cast, ca. 1929. Photo: ISAC Museum Archives.

BOTTOM LEFT: Figure 2. Friedrich Koch photographing stelae at Abu Simbel from the mast of the expedition's *dahabeah*, February 1906. Photo: V. Persons, ISAC Museum Archives.

TOP RIGHT: Figure 3. Victor Persons or James Breasted (at top of ladder) copying inscriptions in the Great Hall of the temple at Abu Simbel, February 1906. Photo: F. Koch, ISAC Museum Archives.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Figure 4. The Coffin Texts Project copying texts in the Egyptian Museum, 1922. Photo: J. Hartman, ISAC Museum Archives. Left to right: Nina de Garis Davies, Alan Gardiner, James Breasted, Ludlow Bull(?).

Breasted presented Nelson (fig. 5) with a proposal to be part of a grand project:

As you know, I have long been distressed at the gradual disappearance of the hieroglyphic documents in situ in the Egyptian temples. I want to put into the field an epigraphic expedition. Its publication should be exhaustive and include the temples of Thebes, at least the temples of Karnak, Luxor, Medinet Habu, and the Ramesseum. Of these, you will remember, Medinet Habu is still as a whole practically unpublished. I do not know how many volumes this would make, but hazarding a guess, I should say from seven to ten volumes. That would be a block of scientific work of incalculable value and one of which any orientalist might be proud. The Institute is now in a position to furnish the means, the men, and the equipment for doing this job. The situation here is very favorable for its accomplishment, and I have now definitely decided to go ahead with it.

A few months later, he added with supreme confidence, “Our enterprises are far more extensive than anything I had ever hoped would be actually realized in my lifetime.”

In May 1924, Nelson signed a contract with the University of Chicago to be the first field director of its new Epigraphic Survey. And so the Epigraphic Survey was born.

### WHY MEDINET HABU?

But where to start in Luxor? Breasted selected Medinet Habu (fig. 6), the great complex of Ramesses III (ca. 1184–1153 BCE), because, in his estimation, its wall reliefs were “of outstanding historical importance.” The reliefs provided a perfect example of how accurately documenting them and their texts could add to the historical record. More pragmatically, Breasted noted to Nelson, “The reason we are attacking Medinet Habu is the very fact that so few of its texts are published.” Work began there in fall 1924 (and continues to this day).

As noted, Breasted had a vision for ambitious work throughout the Nile Valley. This vision was most expansive in the years following World War I when the European powers, whose economies had been so damaged in the war, had to curtail some of their activities, thus giving Breasted the opportunity to enact some of his plans. He declared his intent to publish the entire Karnak complex, Luxor Temple, the Ramesseum, the tomb of Ramesses III in the Valley of the Kings, and the Roman temple at Deir el-Shaweit. Further afield, in 1930, he mused about documenting Amarna, and in 1931, the temple of Behbeit el-Hagar in the Delta. Initially, the planned work at Saqqara included at least nine Old Kingdom mastaba tombs, and he discussed expanding that work to include Middle Kingdom paintings and reliefs, starting at Beni Hasan.

Breasted planned that his life’s work would continue long after he was gone. In 1924, he wrote to Nelson that he had made

a definite decision regarding the future work of the Oriental Institute. You will be interested to know that on my way through New York last month, while I was stopping at Mr. Rockefeller’s house, he assured me of

his cordial support of the work I was endeavoring to carry out, and that he would furnish its maintenance for another five-year period at double the present annual budget. This means that the work of the Institute is definitely assured on a much-expanded scale until the summer of 1929. It means further that its future is morally assured as permanent, not only during my working lifetime, but also afterward, because even if Mr. Rockefeller should withdraw his support after my retirement (he will certainly not do it before), the work of the Institute will be already so established and recognized as an indispensable department of research that the University of Chicago will be inevitably bound to go on with it.

### THE DEATH OF BREASTED AND THE DEPRESSION

The year 1935 (fig. 7) brought difficult times for the Survey. Breasted died suddenly in late December, but even before his death it was clear that lean times were ahead. In 1928, Rockefeller had committed funding for ten years, until June 30, 1939. But in 1936, Breasted’s successor as Oriental Institute director, John Wilson (a former epigrapher; fig. 8), wrote to Nelson, “Since 1928, the economic situation has fundamentally changed. For some time, it has become increasingly clear that the Institute’s future after 1939 was destined to reflect this change in a very marked degree. . . . Even before the Director’s death we had a clear intimation that, insomuch as the American and world economic situation has changed so drastically, the Institute could not hope for continued support on the same scale as present. . . . Now a policy of retrenchment has been made virtually a condition of future support.” Wilson was forced to make very difficult decisions in marking all of Chicago’s field projects—in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Turkey, or Syria—for either “contraction” or “excision.” He informed Nelson, “Within a month or two the situation may so close down upon us that you will be our only operative field expedition.” He sought to convince the funders of the special conditions and importance of the Egyptian work: “We hope to hold the Luxor section of our work in a special category. We have there the Egyptian Headquarters (a term which we shall stress), permanent buildings with a well-equipped library [at Chicago House], really an outpost of the University. This we shall present as of special nature.”

The financial problems manifested themselves in early 1934 when the United States government enacted the Gold Reserve Act, which resulted in a devaluation of the dollar. Nelson referred to his staff as “fifty-nine cent” men, after the current value of a dollar of their pay. He negotiated with Chicago for pay supplements and declared that he would try to effect savings in the daily operations and return some of that as supplements to the staff. This strategy created uncomfortable situations for Nelson because some Survey members, naturally concerned about their own pay, scrutinized his purchases, including those for the library, because they hoped to receive a portion of the reserves.

In 1935, the budget for the Epigraphic Survey was cut by 80 percent, and dramatic cuts in operations and expenses were needed. Personnel were reduced to Nelson and a staff of three or four, and Wilson directed Nelson to “see what he [Nelson] can do

about bringing the Epigraphic work to termination or to a radically reduced basis.” Of primary concern to Wilson was the publication of the work done so far: “Our chief concern in the next two or three years is the publication of the results of our extended activity over the past ten years. Whatever the future activity of the Oriental Institute may be, we have an obligation to publish the results of past activity.”

In January 1937, Wilson wrote that the budget for the next season was cut to “a lamentably small” \$7,000. In 1937 there were still four artists, but the number was reduced by one each year, leaving Stanley Shepherd as the sole artist in 1939, the last season before the Survey closed for World War II—an incredible change from only a few years before, when six artists were on the team. Two Egyptologists worked with Nelson from 1937 to 1939, dropping to one in 1939. Wilson trusted Nelson’s administrative abilities and left the difficult decisions to him, leading to painful situations such as when, in February, Wilson decided that only one epigrapher could be retained. He gave Nelson letters of dismissal addressed to the two Egyptologists, instructing him to deliver one letter and destroy the

other. The last season before the war, the staff consisted of Nelson, epigrapher Richard Parker, artist Shepherd, and photographer Henry Leichter, almost the same level of staff as in 1924.

In February 1937, Nelson submitted several cost-cutting proposals to Wilson, including working mainly at Karnak and reducing the time at Medinet Habu to two months of the season to save the expense of the west bank temple staff, the gasoline for the launch, and the extra car.

Under the careful financial stewardship of Wilson, the Survey continued its work, although on a reduced basis. In November 1936, Nelson was able to report, “The spirit of the household seems so far to be very good. Everyone is joining in cheerfully and accepting economies with a good will. We have arranged for the men to go across to Medinet Habu only in the mornings, which means a savings on car fuel and enables us to do with only one chauffeur.” Nelson also shuffled his staff: since the ladder men had nothing to do in the afternoon after the team returned to the house, some of them became impromptu gardeners.



TOP LEFT: Figure 5. Harold Nelson with his wife, Libbie, and daughter, Irene, ca. 1925. Photo: Epigraphic Survey.

TOP RIGHT: Figure 6. Aerial view of Medinet Habu, the mortuary temple complex of Ramesses III (ca. 1184–1153 BCE), looking southwest. Photo: E. Teeter.

BOTTOM LEFT: Figure 7. Staff, spouses, and visitors in the courtyard of Chicago House, November or December 1935, shortly before Breasted’s death. Breasted and his wife, Imogen, are seated in the center with Harold Nelson. Photo: Epigraphic Survey.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Figure 8. John Wilson holding the drawings for what would be published as *Medinet Habu I*, April 17, 1928. Photo: Edgerton Archive, Epigraphic Survey.

## THE WAR YEARS

By October 1939, Wilson correctly forecast that by the end of the year, the Epigraphic Survey would be the sole expedition of the Oriental Institute. Nelson made preparations for a 1940 season, issuing contracts for Leichter, Shepherd, and engineer Tim Healey. But because of the outbreak of World War II, the Survey was forced to close in April 1940 and did not reopen until the start of the 1946 season. Nelson transferred his professional library and “all the records possible” to Chicago for safekeeping.

## THE POSTWAR YEARS

Harold Nelson and his wife, Libbie, spent the 1945 season preparing Chicago House so that the Epigraphic Survey could resume work in October 1946. The staff had spent the war in government service. Epigrapher Charles Nims, for example, served as an army chaplain in France from 1943 to 1946. More dramatic was Tim Healey’s two-and-a-half-year experience in the British navy on transatlantic and Baltic patrols. He survived his ship’s being sunk by a torpedo or mine, and being blown into the water, and, as Nelson wrote to Wilson, “the next thing he knew was when he woke up in hospital. He came out of it all without a scratch. He said he has had all the war he wants and never again for him.”

Wilson managed to restore some of the budget. In anticipation of resuming work, books and some records were shipped back to Luxor.

## WORK IN THE EARLY 1950S

In 1954, Oriental Institute director Carl Kraeling (fig. 9) approached the Rockefeller Foundation with a proposal to make a push to finish the work at Medinet Habu by 1961. The budget called for funding two additional artists and one Egyptologist for three years. Although the proposal was declined, it stimulated a visit by Rockefeller Foundation representatives to Chicago, a Mr. Creel in 1954 and John

Marshall in 1955, the latter of whom proved to be more helpful. Marshall’s visit to Luxor in February got off to a bad start when he announced to Survey director George Hughes that he was visiting to see the operation, not to authorize funds; however, he commented that he thought the Foundation’s turn away from archaeology to humanities should be reconsidered. Hughes instructed the staff to “be damned busy and poor looking when he shows up,” musing, “Why do funders turn their backs on a gilt-edged investment of proven performance like this?” when the Survey was “just about the most significant doggoned thing he is going to find in his ‘humanities’ area.”

Marshall’s visit actually went well. Later that year, Kraeling presented another proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation, this time for ten years of funding, again with the goal of adding staff to complete work at Medinet Habu by 1961. In December 1955, Kraeling reported that the Institute had received \$400,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation and could move forward on the plan. Hughes vowed, “I promise you we shall finish Medinet Habu by 1961 or bust a hame-strap in the attempt.” The 1961 deadline for finishing the temple was derailed by the 1956 Suez Crisis and its aftermath.

## PUBLIC LAW 480 FUNDING IN THE 1960S

In 1963, George Hughes was recalled to Chicago to join the faculty. In January 1964, Charles Nims became the Survey’s fifth field director (fig. 10). He had worked with the Survey almost continuously for over twenty years, so the transition had few bumps. In 1968 Nims became the sixth director of the Oriental Institute.

A crucial administrative development for the Nims years was the award of Public Law 480 funds to the Oriental Institute in early 1963. These moneys were held by the US government as credit for payments from the Egyptian government for US grain donated to Egypt. Disbursed in Egyptian pounds (£E), the funds were made

THIS PAGE RIGHT: Figure 9. Oriental Institute director Carl Kraeling and Epigraphic Survey field director George Hughes in the Chicago House library, 1950. Photo: C. Nims.

OPPOSITE PAGE LEFT: Figure 10. Charles Nims with his wife, Myrtle, in the field director’s suite at Chicago House, ca. 1966. Photo: Epigraphic Survey.

OPPOSITE PAGE RIGHT: Figure 11. Survey director Lanny Bell with assistant Carlotta Maher, an indefatigable fundraiser for Chicago House, ca. 1987. Photo: B. Burgess.





available to American institutions working in Egypt, and they proved to be essential to the continued operation of Chicago House. The grant funds could be used to pay the salaries of the Egyptian staff and for supplies, house maintenance, and some travel expenses that did not have to be paid in dollars.

Although the PL 480 money provided an essential financial cushion for the Survey's operations, the grant also entailed a huge amount of extra administrative work for Nims, who now had to manage which expenses could be paid with Egyptian pounds from the grant and which in dollars from Chicago, and who also had to write detailed annual financial reports. Complicated banking regulations in Egypt had to be navigated, along with accounting in two currencies. The funds were funneled from the State Department to the Smithsonian Institution and then administered by the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) in Cairo, resulting in closer ties—not always totally amicable—between ARCE and Chicago House. It was a new and unpleasant experience for the field director to have to justify his expenses to ARCE's administrators and accountants, who in turn had to report to the Smithsonian.

Uncertainty also lingered about the continuation of the funding. In February 1964, Nims expressed the hope that “the renewal of the . . . grant is underway.” But on April 22, 1964, the Oriental Institute received a dreaded “We are deeply sorry” letter from the State Department that informed the university it would not be receiving further support, ending in the chipper “We hope you will be successful in obtaining financial support from other sources.” The termination arose from a new policy of shifting funding away from archaeology to people and programs. The situation was dire enough that Nims and Adams discussed “the probable necessity of curtailment of our work in case additional funds are not forthcoming.” They also examined how the work could be presented in a framework of “cultural relations with Egypt and its people,” which might be more aligned with the new funding policy. Yet the

following year, in October 1965, Chicago House received a State Department grant of \$22,500,206 and a further \$32,725 for the period July 1, 1965, to September 30, 1966.

## FUNDRAISING FROM THE 1970S TO THE PRESENT

In fall 1977, Lanny Bell, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania who was well known to Chicago House from his own work in western Thebes, assumed the position of field director. By necessity, much of Bell's time was devoted to fundraising, because the PL 480 program on which the Survey had relied for years was to end in 1985. In early financial forecasts, the Oriental Institute estimated that Chicago House would have to raise about \$100,000 annually. The private sector seemed the most promising for donations. Bell presented a budget and plan to Oriental Institute director Robert McCormick Adams that relied heavily on public relations and publicity.

Bell gave innumerable library tours at Chicago House, during which visitors were introduced to the mission and work of the Survey. These tours took considerable time but turned many potential funders into actual supporters. Bell was assisted by Jill (Carlotta) Maher (fig. 11), who originated the idea of paid tours, organized events, and handwrote sheaves of letters to donors and potential donors. Initially, the tours included the library as well as the residence wing, to give visitors an idea of life at the house, but by the late 1990s they were restricted to the library and perhaps a reception in the residence courtyard or tea room. By 1986, the idea of a Friends of Chicago House (FOCH) group became more organized when, following a tour of Luxor, Ron and Ann Wolfe, who lived in Cairo, organized and based the group there to reach out to members of the expatriate business community and to US corporations operating in Egypt. Some of their efforts resulted in substantial gifts, and many advocates for the Survey raised awareness among the American expat, corporate, and US government community in Cairo about the Survey's preservation work in Luxor.



## NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE 1980S AND 1990S

Bell resigned from Chicago House in early summer 1987. Peter Dorman, then at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, served as associate director of the Survey for the 1988 season and assumed the position of field director on July 1, 1989 (fig. 12). Under Dorman, the Survey initially operated as in the recent past, including working in the Small Temple of Amun at Medinet Habu.

However, Dorman sought a new direction at Medinet Habu. As he wrote in his first independent annual report on the 1989 season, he had taken “a hard look at the project” and what he found was not good news: “It was discovered that virtually all the exterior views of the small temple must be redone, since the existing photographs are either too small to be used, poorly lighted, out of plumb, or incomplete in their coverage.”

Photography took on a new urgency in the 1990s with heightened awareness of the rate at which the Egyptian monuments were being damaged or destroyed. One of the greatest dangers was rising groundwater, caused primarily by intensive irrigation of the cane fields in Luxor. Dorman wrote, “The ES must expand its photographic operations considerably in order to keep up with the rapidly accelerating deterioration of the pharaonic monuments.” Part of this effort was a program of scanning archival negatives that preserved now-vanished features of monuments and exploring “new techniques for analyzing and presenting that computerized material.” The award of a five-year Egyptian Antiquities Project (EAP) grant through ARCE in 1996 (extended through 2006) expanded the scope of the work at Medinet Habu, funding further cleaning and

conservation of the walls and introducing “protective measures that would safeguard the building and its inscribed walls” along with recovery, documentation, and publication of reused blocks at the site.

The foundations of the Small Temple were examined by structural engineer Conor Power and conservators John Stewart and Hiroko Kariya in the 1996 season. They recommended that the foundations be exposed, documented, and then reburied. Excavation of the foundations in the area of the Ptolemaic Hall by the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities revealed 400 blocks, many of them with reliefs from a Kushite-era (ca. 747–656 BCE) structure. Other trenching work recovered the well-preserved statue of a priest who served both the Small Temple of Amun and the sanctuary of the deified Amenhotep Son of Hapu at Deir el-Bahari. Work on the roof of the Small Temple was again a priority, for although rain was infrequent, when it occurred water seeped through the faulty roof joins, leaving streaks on the walls and precipitating the growth of salt that further damaged the reliefs. In the 1997 season, stonemason Dany Roy cleaned the roof, documented its construction, and commissioned new blocks of sandstone from the quarry at Gebel Silsila to match the original stone roof (fig. 13). The project restored the channels that direct rainwater off the roof. The EAP grant continued for several more years and allowed the Survey to stabilize, protect, and continue the documentation of the temple.

Like his predecessors, Dorman spent a substantial but necessary amount of time and effort on fundraising. A major issue was the stability of the Egyptian pound. In some years, 1991 for example, a



LEFT: Figure 12. Peter Dorman, field director of the Epigraphic Survey from 1989 to 1996. Photo: S. Lezon.

RIGHT: Figure 13. Dany Roy working in the Small Temple of Amun, 1997. Photo: Y. Kobylecky.

strong pound worked in the Survey's favor. But in 1995, a dramatic drop in interest rates erased a third of its operating income. Carlotta Maher continued to play a major role in donor development. She persuaded many individuals to give generous gifts for naming opportunities at the house, resulting in the senior artist's suite being named for longtime Oriental Institute supporter Mrs. Carolyn Livingood, and the photo studio eventually being named in honor of Carlotta and David Maher by their friends and family. The FOCH programs continued.

The mid-1990s saw a new level of financial stability. In 1995, with the urging of Ambassador Frank Wisner and the assistance of W. Benson Harer Jr., the US Congress passed legislation creating an endowment for the operating expenses of the Epigraphic Survey. This endowment was crucial for the Survey after the PL 480 funding program—on which the Survey had relied since 1963—expired in 1985. The act also created a \$20 million fund for EAP projects administered by ARCE, which had a dramatic impact on the Survey's work. In 1995, Chicago received a seven-year EAP grant for conservation and protective storage of the blocks at Luxor Temple, and then, in 1996, a ten-year EAP grant for work at the Small Temple at Medinet Habu. Both grants allowed additional staff, especially conservators, to be hired. The grants created a new conservation focus for the Epigraphic Survey but were negotiated to support documentation as well. Although this shift was not without controversy, it was a sign of the times that conservation and preservation had to be added to the Epigraphic Survey programs,

especially since this assistance was officially requested by the Supreme Council of Antiquities to help it address the alarming acceleration of the monuments' decay. By the late 1990s, with the EAP grants and the endowment, Chicago House was in its most secure financial condition since 1935.

Under W. Raymond Johnson (fig. 14), who became field director in March 1997, the Survey's long-term documentation programs were augmented by expanded physical conservation and restoration work on both sides of the river, made necessary by rapidly changing climatic and demographic conditions in Egypt. Johnson's years as director were marked by an emphasis on conservation and restoration in an effort to help Egypt address the accelerating decay of the monuments in Luxor. Funding secured from ARCE, the World Monuments Fund, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the conservation (and documentation) projects. During his tenure, Johnson was able to help convince the US Embassy and USAID Egypt of the worthiness of groundwater mitigation projects throughout Egypt by conducting site tours, where he was able to point out the physical problems caused by increased agriculture, rising groundwater, and changing weather and population patterns. USAID-sponsored dewatering projects have now lowered the groundwater in Luxor as well as at other cultural-heritage sites throughout Egypt, arresting the salt decay and stabilizing the monuments that are at the core of Egypt's economy. Today, field director J. Brett McClain is leading the Survey into its second century.

The sources of quotations cited in this excerpt and other documentation may be accessed in the original full publication, available at [bit.ly/TeeterBook](https://bit.ly/TeeterBook).



ABOVE: Figure 14. Ray Johnson in his office at Chicago House, 2018. Photo: S. Lezon.

## BOOK CLUB EVENT

*CHICAGO ON THE NILE:  
100 YEARS OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY*

ISAC members are invited to join Emily Teeter on January 8 and 29, 2025, for a two-part, members-only virtual book-club discussion about *Chicago on the Nile*. Andrew Baumann, managing editor of ISAC's publications office and a former epigrapher and artist for the Epigraphic Survey, will moderate the sessions. See page 21 for more information and to register.

# EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY GALA

On September 21, 2024, festivities for the Epigraphic Survey Centennial kicked off in Hyde Park with a gala reception and dinner attended by more than two hundred people. The evening began with a reception in the Museum, where guests mingled over hors d'oeuvres and drinks in the Mesopotamian gallery and viewed the special exhibition *Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey in Egypt*. The reception was followed by dinner on the University of Chicago's main quadrangle, with a program featuring remarks by ISAC Advisory Council chair Anthony Diamandakis; University of Chicago president Paul Alivisatos; ISAC director Timothy Harrison; and the Consul General of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Chicago, H. E. Nada Draz.

As a highlight of the evening's program, ISAC Museum director and chief curator Marc Maillot moderated a panel discussion about the Epigraphic Survey with the cocurators of the Centennial special exhibition. Survey field director Brett McClain, ISAC associate Emily Teeter, and Egyptology PhD candidate Catherine Witt reflected on the foundational role of Chicago House and the Epigraphic Survey in their own careers, and on the Survey's unique status as a long-term project that has involved generations of scholars and students.

ISAC thanks everyone who joined us and contributed to making this event memorable. We look forward to continuing to celebrate one hundred years of this remarkable work with our supporters, both here in Chicago and in Egypt.



ABOVE:

Vicky Diamandakis and Rebecca Potter

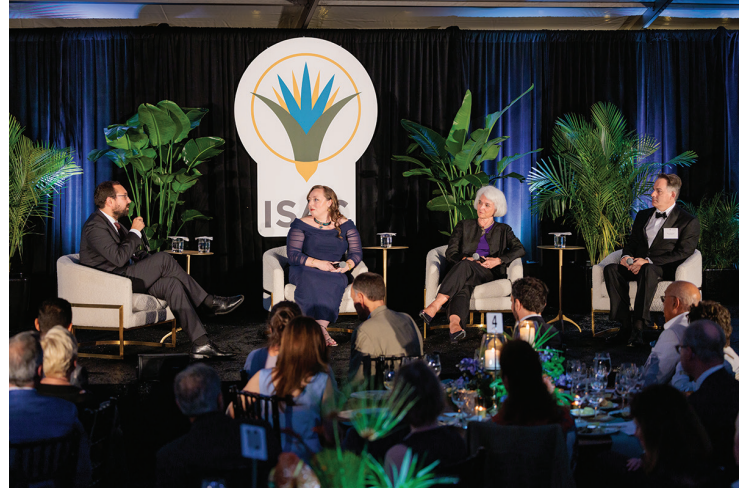
PHOTOS BY JOHN ZICH

TOP TO BOTTOM:

Catherine Novotny and James Osborne

University of Chicago President Paul Alivisatos

H. E. Nada Draz, Consul General of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Chicago



TOP TO BOTTOM:  
Current and past Epigraphic Survey staff  
ISAC Director Timothy P. Harrison, Leann Stover Nyce,  
Maria Cecilia Lozada, and Rex Haydon  
Guests enjoying conversation at dinner

TOP TO BOTTOM:  
Presentation panel: Marc Maillot, Catie Witt, Emily Teeter, and J. Brett McClain  
David Pichurski, Marilyn Murray, Sue Geshwender, and Denise Browning  
Anthony Diamandakis and Andreas Angelopoulos

# ISAC EXCAVATIONS AT SUHAR, SULTANATE OF OMAN

by Derek Kennet

Archaeological excavations are long, expensive, and time-consuming activities. There needs to be a very good reason to undertake them.

This is especially true if your excavation happens to be on a lovely Indian Ocean beach with cafés and fish restaurants, in one of the most dramatically beautiful countries in Arabia. In such a case, it is very likely that your ISAC colleagues will accuse you of excavating simply to enjoy yourself.

The site of the new ISAC excavations at the port of Suhar, in the Sultanate of Oman, does in fact have a beach and lots of cafés (figs. 1 and 2). Hence, it is important to make sure we have a very good academic reason for excavating there. And we do!

The early centuries of Islam (seventh to ninth centuries CE) witnessed a significant boom in maritime trade, right across the Indian Ocean. For the first time ever, ships began to sail between the two global economic superpowers of the time: Iraq (the center of the Abbasid Empire) and China (the Tang Empire) (fig. 3). Luxury commodities with high-profit margins such as silks, spices, aromatics (incense), and glazed ceramics, which were previously traded in very small quantities on the backs of camels along the Silk Road, now began to be moved by ships in much larger quantities. The economy of Asia—and indeed the whole known world—was completely transformed. People in the West sometimes like to imagine that Westerners were the originators of global trade. This is not true. The developments described here make it clear that the earliest roots of the modern “global economy” were here, in the Indian Ocean. The main protagonists in this trade were Muslim Arab sailors, many of whom were from the Sultanate of Oman (fig. 4).

But how did these developments come about? Who were the people who undertook these pioneering, dangerous, and multiyear journeys across the ocean? What drove them to do it? How did they operate? Were they organized into companies, or did they operate independently? What about the communities who lived on the coasts and in the ports—how were their lives affected by this trade? I want to know more about these developments; I want to understand how they came about and how they affected the lives of people.

The problem we face—historians and archaeologists alike—is that these traders left practically no written records. They did not keep written logs, nor did they write home (because there was no way of doing so). No records of their activities have ended up in libraries and archives. The amazing stories of these pioneering merchants are lost to history.

It is because of these historical “gaps” that we turn to the archaeological evidence. But even here we face problems. The main commodities—textiles, spices, and incense—do not survive in the archaeological record. They rot and are rarely found by excavators. Fortunately, we are saved by Chinese ceramics. During this period, the Chinese were the most advanced ceramic makers in the world. Their beautiful green and white stonewares easily surpassed the

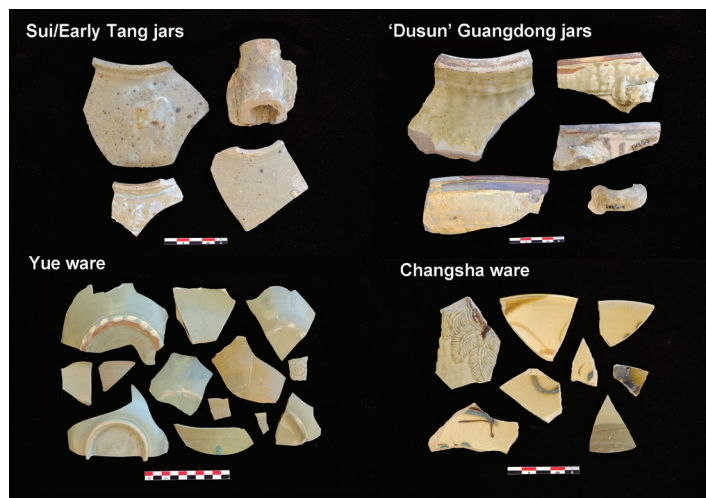
best that the medieval Christian and Muslim worlds could produce (fig. 5). These wares were therefore in great demand, to proclaim one’s wealth and status. Many of these sherds were found on the surface at Suhar during field survey (fig. 6).

Literally hundreds of thousands—probably millions—of these wares were exported from China to the Near East. The famous ninth-century shipwreck off the coast of the island of Belitung, near Singapore, was loaded with nearly 60,000 Chinese Changsha bowls on their way to Iraq (fig. 7). Sherds of such bowls have been found at archaeological sites all around the Indian Ocean, sometimes in



TOP: Figure 1. Sunrise at Suhar. Photo by Rosalind MacDonald.

БОТТОМ: Figure 2. Oblique drone image looking at the old town of Suhar from the southeast. Photo by Davit Naskidashvili.



LEFT TOP: Figure 3. Suhar and the sea route to China. Image by Google Earth.

LEFT BOTTOM: Figure 4. The famous *Jewel of Muscat* undergoing sea trials. This ship is a faithful reconstruction of the ninth-century dhow that sank off Belitung, close to modern-day Singapore, and is a good example of the types of ships that would have made the long journey from the Middle East to China at this time. Photo by Alessandro Ghidoni.

RIGHT TOP: Figure 5. Sherds of ninth-century Tang ceramics from the excavations. These sherds traveled across the Indian Ocean by ship. Photo by Seth Priestman.

RIGHT MIDDLE: Figure 6. Ceramics from the early Islamic period just lying on the surface at Suhar and recovered by survey. Photo by Rosalind MacDonald.

RIGHT BOTTOM: Figure 7. A ninth-century Chinese Changsha bowl from the Belitung shipwreck. The ship was carrying 59,000 such bowls; fragments of similar bowls have been found at Suhar (see fig. 5). Photo by Peter Magee.



massive quantities. We can date these sherds, and we can see at exactly which Chinese kilns they were made. This allows us to trace the routes these merchants followed, the ports they visited, and the places where they stopped to trade—all indicated by the presence of Chinese sherds.

An important element of the work at Suhar is to look for these wares, to quantify them, to determine when they first occurred, and to ascertain whether their quantities increased or decreased over the course of different centuries (figs. 8–10). Were the same producers used, or did merchants switch producers? Did the quality stay the same, or did merchants look for cheaper versions to increase their sales?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SUHAR

In the western Indian Ocean, three key ports handled this trade: Basra (Iraq), Siraf (Iran), and Suhar on the coast of Oman. Suhar is mentioned in many historical sources of the ninth century as the “gateway to China.” Suhar’s location gave it access to trade moving from China and India to Iraq, Iran, and Egypt—the three key areas of the early Islamic empire. That Suhar played a pivotal role in this trade marks it as an archaeological site of truly global significance.

## THE ISAC SUHAR EXCAVATION PROJECT

The excavations of the current ISAC Suhar Project aim to tackle the foregoing questions. The project is a collaboration of ISAC at the University of Chicago, the Omani Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and the Department of Archaeology at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Staff from other universities (Durham and Cardiff in the United Kingdom) are also involved. The excavations began in January 2024 and are slated to continue for at least seven more years. ISAC is funding the work.

During the first season (January and February 2024), great progress was made. A series of deep archaeological soundings has begun to clarify the structure of the buried town (figs 11 and 12). A strategy involving a combination of deep soundings and extensive exposure offers a way forward for investigation. The work is combined with cutting-edge strategies for paleoenvironmental recording, finds recovery, and scientific dating.

The Suhar Project team (fig. 13) will resume work this coming winter (in January and February 2025). If you feel like spending some time on a lovely beach (with a good academic excuse), please come and visit!



TOP: Figure 8. An archaeological sounding near the main mosque of the town. The imam of the mosque kindly allowed us to excavate in his neat garden. Photo by the Suhar Project.

BOTTOM: Figure 9. Suhar Project codirector Seth Priestman studying the thousands of ceramic sherds from the excavations. Photo by the Suhar Project.





LEFT: Figure 10. A hoard of bronze coins from the early Islamic period found by the project. Photo by the Suhar Project.

BELOW: Figure 11. A “step trench” in operation. “Stepping” the sides of the trench in this way makes it safe to excavate without the risk of collapse. Photo by the Suhar Project.



LEFT: Figure 12. Local children try their hand at excavating and sieving. A lot of local people were interested in our work. Photo by the Suhar Project.

ABOVE: Figure 13. The 2024 ISAC Suhar Project team. Photo by the Suhar Project.

# FACULTY UPDATE

## MARGARET GEOGA



Margaret Geoga is assistant professor of Egyptology at the University of Chicago. She earned her PhD in Egyptology at Brown University, where she also completed a concurrent master's degree in comparative literature. Maggie's research focuses on ancient Egyptian literature, scribal culture, textual transmission, and reception in both ancient Egypt and later periods. Her current book project examines the transmission and reception of *The Teaching of Amenemhat*, an enigmatic Middle Egyptian poem depicting the murder of a pharaoh. Prior to coming to the University of Chicago, Maggie was an Andrew W. Mellon postdoctoral fellow in the humanities at the Wolf Humanities Center of the University of Pennsylvania and taught at Brown University and Providence College. Her teaching includes courses on ancient Egyptian language and texts, ancient Egyptian literature in translation, ancient Egyptian history and culture, and the reception of ancient Egypt in later periods.

After fifteen years on the East Coast, I was absolutely delighted to return to my hometown and join the University of Chicago as assistant professor of Egyptology in July 2023. My interest in ancient Egypt began on childhood field trips to Chicago museums, and my first forays into Egyptology were at ISAC (then the Oriental Institute), where I spent a summer volunteering in registration, and the Field Museum, where I worked as an intern for a year after college. It has been so wonderful being back in Chicago and rejoining its warm and welcoming Egyptology community.

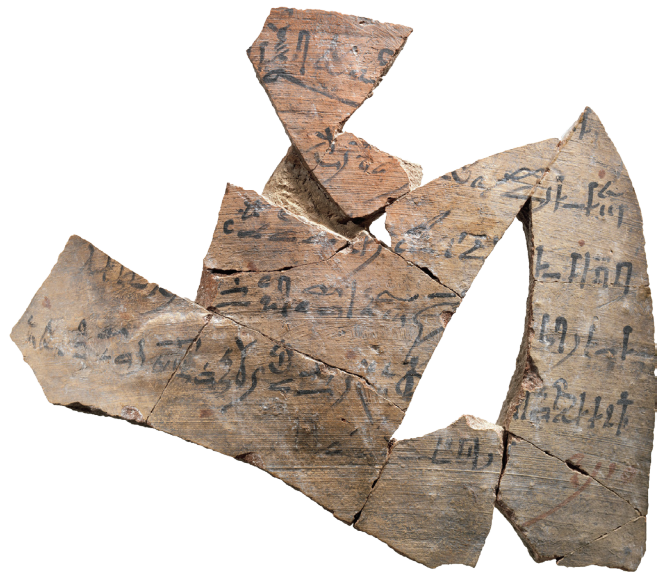
My main focus this past year at ISAC has been my first book, which focuses on the transmission and reception of one of ancient Egypt's most popular and dramatic poems. This poem, *The Teaching of Amenemhat*, is the only work of ancient Egyptian literature to depict the murder of a king. It does so in a harrowing account of the sleeping king being attacked by his own bodyguards—an account narrated by the king himself, seemingly from beyond the grave. Here and throughout the poem, the king leaves much unsaid, to the chagrin of Egyptologists today, but perhaps to the delight of the poem's many ancient readers, who, thanks to its ambiguities, were

able to interpret the poem and make it meaningful in multiple ways.

*The Teaching of Amenemhat* survives today in more than 250 manuscripts (at least three of which are in the ISAC collection), more than nearly all other ancient Egyptian literary texts, in a clear indication of the poem's popularity in antiquity. Each of these manuscripts attests to an encounter between a particular reader and the poem: from a bureaucrat in the capital, to a scribal student in the provinces, to a Kushite king in Nubia. My book aims to center these readers and their encounters with *Amenemhat* to assess how the poem was being interpreted in antiquity, as well as how those interpretations shifted over the course of the approximately 1,000 years in which it was in circulation. By closely examining textual variations throughout the corpus of manuscripts, and by re-embedding the manuscripts within their material and social contexts—important factors that are often lost when we study a text in a library book, separate from the physical manuscripts people made in a given moment and situation—I have identified several shifts in the poem's reception over time. Some of these shifts are subtle; for example, over time, readers seem to become increasingly

interested in a heightened emotional experience. Other shifts are more substantive, even centering on the issue at the heart of the poem: whether Amenemhat I has indeed been killed by his bodyguards or whether he has survived a failed assassination attempt (one of the poem's most frustrating ambiguities!). My book traces the afterlife of *Amenemhat*—from its earliest surviving manuscripts from around 1550 BCE, to its numerous copies made by New Kingdom scribes, its quotation in several Nubian royal monuments of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty, and finally its latest surviving copy from about 500 BCE—to reconstruct the transmission and reception histories of this important and enigmatic poem. In doing so, I hope to help shift ancient Egyptian philology away from an author-centric approach to ancient Egyptian literature toward one that instead foregrounds ancient readers and their varied experiences.

One of the major issues my book deals with is scribal culture: how ancient Egyptian scribes saw themselves, how they constructed and expressed those identities, and how they involved literature like *Amenemhat* in these processes. I explore scribal culture not only in my book on *Amenemhat* but also in a collected volume that my coeditors and I completed this year. The volume, *Looking Beyond the Text: New Approaches to Scribal Culture and Practices in Ancient Egypt* (coedited with Aurore Motte and Judith Jurjens), builds on a conference we organized in Mainz in May 2023, which was attended by 35 in-person and nearly 200 online participants. The volume includes papers that explore, among other topics, Coptic-era scribal education, the neurological implications of scribes' choice of writing implement, and Egyptology's potential synergies with the field of book history. In addition to *Looking Beyond the Text*, I have begun to explore the theme of scribal culture from a different perspective in a new project on the connections between poetry, scribal discourse and identities, and kingship. I presented preliminary work on this project in a lecture for the Chicago chapter of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) at ISAC in March 2024, as well as in a panel at the annual ARCE conference in April. I plan to continue developing this project in collaboration with the other members of this conference panel, all of whom are interested in reevaluating our field's traditional approaches to kingship, an issue that touches nearly all areas of Egyptology in some way. We are currently planning a workshop and multiple publications, both individual and coauthored, over the next few years.



RIGHT TOP: O. Lisht (MMA 32.1.119), with a hieratic copy of *The Teaching of Amenemhat*. From Lisht South, ca. 1295–1070 BCE. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

RIGHT BOTTOM: O. Michaelides 50 (LACMA M.80.203.204), with a cursive hieroglyphic copy of *The Teaching of Amenemhat* from ca. 1300–1070 BCE. Image courtesy of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

# ONLINE ADULT EDUCATION CLASS

## Introduction to Coptic (Part 1)

Tuesdays, February 4–March 25 (8 weeks), live on Zoom and recorded

“These are the secret sayings. . . .” So begins the Coptic version of the Gospel of Thomas. To read such “secret sayings,” this two-part course will provide a complete introduction to the Sahidic dialect of Coptic, the phase of the ancient Egyptian language written with the Greek alphabet and in use from ca. 200 to 1100 CE. The two courses combined are equivalent to one full year in a university program. Introduction to Coptic (Part 1) will enable students to become familiar with the Coptic script, build a 250-word Coptic vocabulary, and develop an understanding of more than a dozen grammatical constructions. Throughout the course, students will apply this knowledge to excerpts of famous Coptic texts, including the Bible, the Sayings of the Fathers, and the Nag Hammadi library. These skills will provide a solid foundation for continued study of Coptic texts and language. For a comprehensive overview of the Coptic language, students may bundle Introduction to Coptic (Part 1) and Introduction to Coptic (Part 2).

Textbook: Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*. Macon: Mercer University Press, 1983.

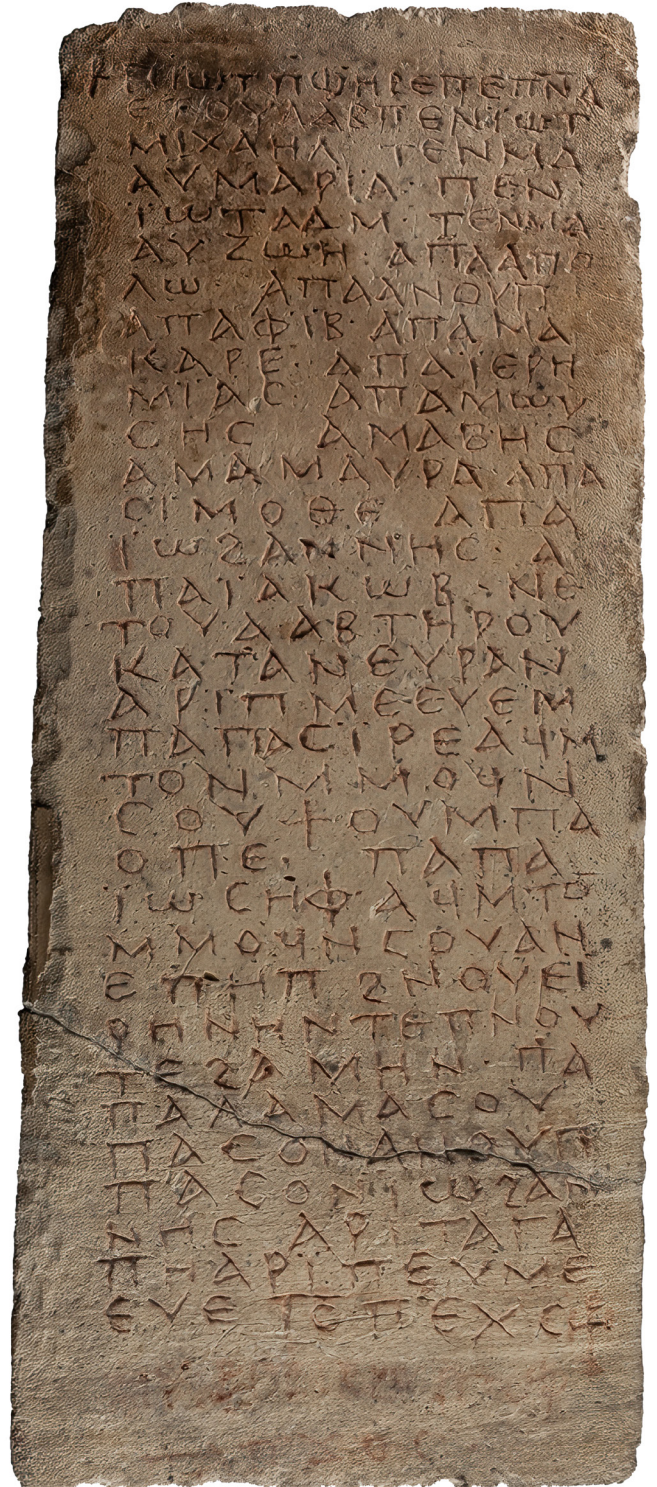
Instructor: Foy Scalf is a research associate and head of the Research Archives at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures. He received his PhD in Egyptology from the University of Chicago. In his published work, he has made contributions to the study of ancient Egyptian religion and sacred scripture, language and linguistics, and the cultural contexts for textual transmission. He is dedicated to bringing the ancient world to the public through continuing education, outreach, and public scholarship.

Cost: Nonmembers \$392; members \$314; docents/volunteers/ISAC travelers \$157; UChicago Lab/charter students, faculty, and staff \$98.

Bundle with Introduction to Coptic (Part 2) and save: non-members \$706; members \$565; docents/volunteers/ISAC travelers \$283; UChicago Lab/charter students, faculty, and staff \$176.

To register, visit: <https://bit.ly/ISACCoptic1>.

RIGHT: ISACM E9161, a Coptic funerary stela with prayers for the repose of the late departed Sive.



# LECTURES AND EVENTS

## Members Book Club

**Chicago on the Nile: 100 Years of the Epigraphic Survey**  
**Wednesdays, January 8 and 29, 7:00 pm Central**  
**Streaming**

Join Emily Teeter for a two-part, members-only virtual book club about her new monograph, *Chicago on the Nile*. The book club will be discussion based, so please come with questions!

The first session on Wednesday, January 8, will cover the beginning of the book through chapter 8. The second session on Wednesday, January 29, will cover chapter 9 to the end of the book.

To register, visit [bit.ly/ISACBookClub](https://bit.ly/ISACBookClub).

**Braidwood Visiting Scholar Lecture: Cheryl Makarewicz**  
**Wednesday, February 5, 7:00 pm Central**  
**ISAC and streaming for members**

[bit.ly/FeblSACLecture](https://bit.ly/FeblSACLecture)

In February Cheryl Makarewicz will deliver the Braidwood Visiting Scholar Lecture. Dr. Makarewicz is Professor of Zooarchaeology and Stable Isotope Science in the Institute of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Archaeology at Christian-Albrechts-University, Kiel.

To register for in-person attendance, visit <https://bit.ly/Makarewicz>.



Old Chicago House during the inundation, October 1927.  
 Photo: Edgerton Collection, Epigraphic Survey.

**Lecture: Catherine Kearns, University of Chicago**  
**Wednesday, March 5, 7:00 pm Central**  
**ISAC and streaming for members**

[bit.ly/ISACMarchLecture](https://bit.ly/ISACMarchLecture)

In March, we welcome University of Chicago assistant professor in the Department of Classics and the College Catherine Kearns. Dr. Kearns's research examines the intersections between social and environmental change in Mediterranean landscapes during the Iron Age period. Her book, *The Rural Landscapes of Archaic Cyprus: An Archaeology of Environmental and Social Change*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2023.

To register for in-person attendance, visit <https://bit.ly/CatherineKearns>.

**Save the Date: Member Appreciation Day, featuring a lecture by assistant professor of Sumerology Jana Matuszak**

**Saturday, March 29, 4:30 pm Central**  
**ISAC and streaming (lecture)**

Stay tuned for details!

**ISAC Museum Discovery Tours**  
**Every Saturday at 1:30 pm Central**  
**ISAC**

Docent-led ISAC Museum Discovery Tours are free and open to the public and will set out from the ISAC Museum lobby every Saturday at 1:30 pm. There is no need to register; simply show up with your questions and curiosity!



Landscape of Cyprus. Photo: Anna Anichkova, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 3.0.

# IN MEMORIAM HOWARD E. HALLENGREN

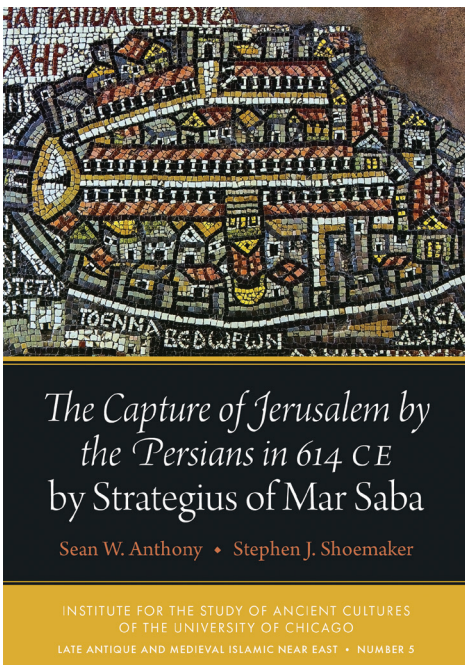
It is with deep sadness that we announce the recent passing of Howard E. Hallengren. An esteemed Life Member of the ISAC Advisory Council since 2013, Howard had been involved with ISAC for fifty years.

With more than sixty years of business experience in the Middle East, Howard combined his personal and intellectual interests to advocate for ISAC's mission, offering immensely valuable insights and ideas in support of our research and fieldwork. During his tenure on the Advisory Council, Howard made many significant contributions to our organization, including crucial financial support for Museum enhancements and many individual projects. Most recently, Howard endowed ISAC's first-ever Professorship of Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States Archaeology. This position, whose inaugural holder is Derek Kennet, established a new frontier for ISAC research, aligned with and expanding on our 1970s work in Yemen, where Howard first volunteered for ISAC, working with McGuire Gibson.

Although Howard's immense generosity and enthusiasm for ISAC will long stand as a permanent legacy to his memory, he will be much missed by all of us who had the privilege to work alongside him.



## FORTHCOMING FROM ISAC PUBLICATIONS



*THE CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM BY THE PERSIANS IN 614 CE*  
BY STRATEGIUS OF MAR SABA

by Sean W. Anthony and Stephen J. Shoemaker  
Late Antique and Medieval Islamic Near East 5

In 614 CE, the armies of Sasanid Persia shocked the Eastern Roman Empire when they besieged and captured Jerusalem, taking a large swath of its population into captivity along with the city's patriarch and the famed relic of the True Cross. This astounding Persian victory over Christian Jerusalem was a key episode in the last war between Rome and Persia in 602–628 CE and occurred at the high tide of Persian advances into the Roman territories in Asia Minor, the Levant, and Egypt. Among those taken captive was a certain Strategius, a monk of Mar Saba, who subsequently took it upon himself to compose a homily recounting the events leading up to the Persian siege of the Holy City and its aftermath. Although Strategius's original account in Greek is lost, it survives via later translations into Georgian and Christian Arabic, two languages that attained prominence in the monasteries of Palestine during the Islamic period. This volume provides, for the first time, complete side-by-side English translations of the Georgian and Arabic recensions. Available January 2025.

# CHICAGO ON THE NILE

## 100 YEARS OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY IN EGYPT

A SPECIAL EXHIBITION AT THE ISAC MUSEUM  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2024—MARCH 23, 2025

In 1924, an Egyptologist, an artist, and a photographer—the staff of the University of Chicago's new Epigraphic Survey—began the task of recording the scenes and inscriptions carved on the walls of the enormous, 3,000-year-old temple of pharaoh Ramesses III at Medinet Habu near Luxor. It was the culmination of a long-standing dream of James Henry Breasted, the first American Egyptologist and founder of ISAC (then the Oriental Institute), to both copy and publish all the historical texts in the Nile Valley. The Epigraphic Survey was established to undertake this unimaginably ambitious program of field research.

A century later, the Epigraphic Survey continues to fulfill Breasted's mission. Housed at Chicago House in Luxor, the expedition has documented some of the most important—and endangered—records to survive from ancient Egypt, using a well-established and tested method to create highly accurate facsimiles of the carvings and texts and to publish them as a permanent archive.

The special exhibition *Chicago on the Nile* features photographs, artifacts, original artworks, and publications that illuminate a century of endeavor to preserve the records of Egypt's ancient past, along with engaging accounts of life and work at Chicago House in Luxor over the past 100 years.

# CHICAGO ON THE NILE

100 YEARS OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY IN EGYPT

A SPECIAL EXHIBITION  
SEPTEMBER 17, 2024—MARCH 23, 2025  
[isac.uchicago.edu/chicagonile](http://isac.uchicago.edu/chicagonile)





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## ISAC MUSEUM

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[isac.uchicago.edu/museum-exhibitions](http://isac.uchicago.edu/museum-exhibitions)