

The Epigraphic and Architectural Survey

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The 1974/75 season of the Epigraphic and Architectural Survey in Luxor, our fifty-first, was a productive and interesting one in which both artists and epigraphers devoted the bulk of their time to the complex problems posed by the important historical scenes of King Seti I at Karnak. Carved on the outer face of the north wall of the Hypostyle Hall, these reliefs record the numerous, and apparently successful, campaigns this Nineteenth Dynasty ruler waged against Egypt's enemies in Lebanon, Syria, Libya, and lands to the south. Artistically, the reliefs are among the finest the New Kingdom has to

offer: well-proportioned, carefully modelled, dealing in complex yet successful ways with problems of composition and story. Remarkable care was taken by the artisans to show the costumes of Egypt's enemies, the subtle details of facial expression on the fallen captives, and even the arrangement of harnesses on the war chariots. Were it only because of their surprising quality, these reliefs would have posed a challenge to the epigraphic and artistic staff. But for a number of reasons that remain unclear, much of this wall, both its texts and figures, underwent substantial recutting, as artisans sought to alter the outlines of a figure's profile or change the content of a historical text. Particular problems were created by the heavy alterations undergone by the name rings, lists of the African and Asiatic places the King conquered on his marches east and south. Here, it often took many days' patient study by artist and epigrapher to sort out the signs that were carved and the order in which they were placed on the wall.

Studies of the upper register of this wall, which was destroyed centuries ago, in an attempt to locate loose blocks and reconstruct the wall's original height revealed the exciting fact that these reliefs continued around the northwest corner, onto a wall that abuts the Second Pylon. Hidden by a later addition built by Shoshenq I, this section of wall had gone unnoticed by all earlier explorers. What we so far have been able to see of the wall—and until next season, when we hope to remove several loose stones, that is not very much—is a figure of King Seti, perhaps drawing his bow, and in front of him traces of a lengthy historical text that may relate to the nearby scene of the battle of Kadesh.

As our epigraphers, William J. Murnane, James Allen, and Frank Yurco, continued their study of the complex problems posed by the Seti wall, our staff of artists turned their attention to the Survey's newest project, the recording of the scenes of the Feast of Opet in the Processional Colonnade of the Temple of Luxor. The pencilling of photographs done there during the last two months of the season provided more than twenty drawings for the artists' summer work, and those will be ready for collation when we return to Luxor in October. These scenes of the Opet Feast, very well carved although in an unfortunate state of preservation, will provide useful companions to other Opet scenes recorded by the Survey in past years and will help insure the continued existence, at least in published form, of a still slowly eroding monument. Recording for just such a purpose—to insure the survival of the data upon which our knowledge of ancient Egypt is based—was, after all, the prime objective set for the Survey when it was founded by James Henry Breasted in 1924. The Opet

scenes are substantial ones, and we estimate that our artists, Reginald Coleman, H. Martyn Lack, and John Romer, will be kept busy there for several more seasons.

Our fourth artist, Mrs. Clare Sampson Semple, has left the Survey to join her husband in Lebanon and the Sudan, and she will be replaced next season by Mr. and Mrs. Frank Howard.

Our photographer, John Ross, will continue the arduous task of photographing the Opet scenes and will be well occupied this coming season with photographs for future projects, including a tomb on the West Bank, our cartographic survey, and further work in Karnak.

At home, the library continues to grow under the supervision of Ms. Andrée Bichara, our librarian, while Hagg Ibrahim and our new engineer continue to keep the equipment of Chicago House running smoothly and efficiently. We are in the process of undertaking a number of both major and minor repairs to insure the continued good health of Chicago House; all our staff has suffered through a year of painting, hammering, plowing and other activities.

As in past seasons, a substantial portion of the expenses of the Survey were borne by funds provided by the Smithsonian Institution through the American Research Center in Egypt.