

# ARCHAEOLOGY



## The Epigraphic Survey

*Lanny Bell*

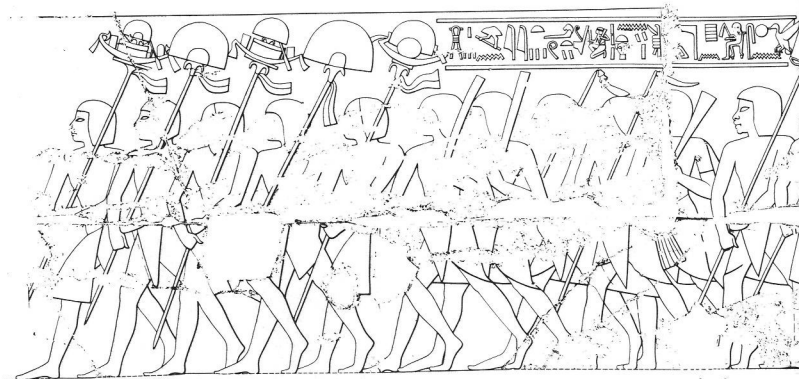
The 1982-83 season of the Epigraphic Survey was our fifty-ninth. Once more our activities were concentrated in the Small Temple at Medinet Habu and the Colonnade at Luxor Temple. At Medinet Habu our epigraphers prepared hand-copies of the inscriptions, as our conservators completed the cleaning and consolidation of the six painted chapels behind the barque sanctuary. At Luxor our artists continued the checking and adjusting of our facsimile drawings of the Opet Festival procession before joining them together to form whole scenes, while Ray Johnson identified 115 new fragments for inclusion in our reconstructions of the walls dismantled anciently. Bill Murnane and I also pursued the study of the decoration of Luxor Temple as a whole, in order to fit our findings from the Colonnade into their proper context.

We had all been distressed, since the beginning of our cleaning efforts at Medinet Habu, by the damage suffered by some of the painted surfaces as a result of an earlier, heavy-handed cleaning attempt. Extensive scrubbing had removed much of the original paint, or left it smeared across the reliefs. This sad condition is evidenced in our earliest photographs of the temple, but a search through the literature has failed to turn up anyone willing to assume responsibility for it. In the course of cleaning up this deplorable mess, our two conservators, Richard and Helena Jaeschke, found a pencilled graffito dated to 1912 written over one of the scrubbed areas, giving us a *terminus ante quem* from which to base our search. Inasmuch as one of the most heavily scrubbed rooms (Room N) was nearly 75% published by both Champollion and Lepsius, our Egyptologist Steven Shubert, who had primary responsibility for making the Medinet Habu hand-copies this year, has suggested that it might turn out to be related to the activities of one of the missions of these early nineteenth century copyists at this site.

The cleaning of the granite naos provided an unexpected addition to our knowledge of the history of these chambers. The back wall of

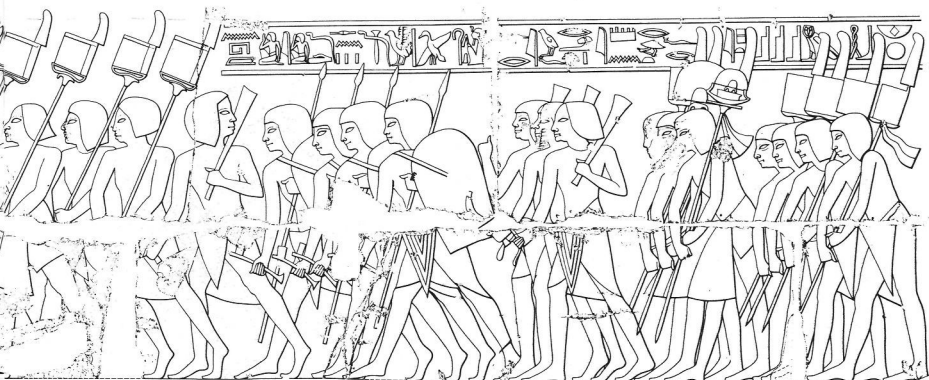


*Artists Sal and Barbie Garfi in the Colonnade at Luxor, checking drawings for final corrections. (Photo by Susan Lezon)*



an inner room had been taken down in antiquity so that this shrine could be introduced into it. Demotic numbers carved on the sandstone blocks indicated to the ancient masons the order in which adjacent stones were to be reassembled. The naos has always been considered uninscribed, and has been assigned to the reign of Nectanebo I, who was active at Medinet Habu in Dynasty XXX. Preliminary cleaning, however, has revealed the existence of a red-painted text intended to guide the sculptors in carving the king's titulary on it. The relief was never executed, and the layer of black soot which has covered the naos in modern times completely concealed the inscription up to now. The king in whose name the monument was to be decorated is Ptolemy IX Soter II, who built the first Pylon of the Small Temple. It is conceivable that the rebellion of the Theban area which Ptolemy IX suppressed in 88-85 B.C. led to the abandonment of work at the site during his reign.

The preparation of hand-copies of the decoration of the Small Temple is now about 75% done, with practically all the walls of the Eighteenth Dynasty core completed. All of Steven's copies so far have been collated by Bill Murnane and are now available as the basis for a preliminary study of the decoration of the temple and the history of its modifications. These reference copies are each accompanied by a sketch of the scene of which they are part, with all areas of erasure, recutting, and hacking carefully noted. They will be of great value in planning our overall approach to solving the problems of recording this monument, and should assist us greatly in establishing the special artistic conventions required and in applying them consistently throughout. They will also help the artists when pencilling in their



*Three joined drawings showing part of the Opet Festival procession in the Luxor Colonnade. (Drawings by John Romer, Thad Rasche, and Ray Johnson)*

photographic enlargements at the wall, in order to minimize the corrections which have to be made later; and they have already permitted our Egyptologists to begin preparing translations and commentaries, research parallels and suggest restorations, and write dictionary cards.

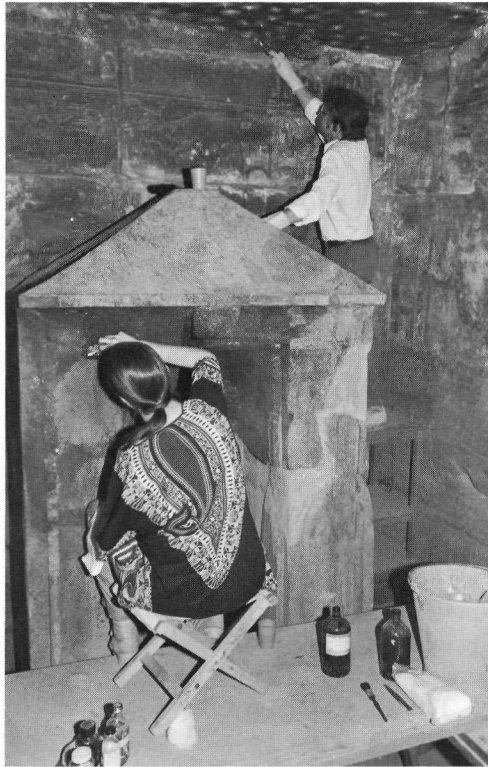
One of the greatest challenges facing the epigraphers are the four polygonal columns which were set up around the barque ambulatory by Akoris of Dynasty XXIX. This king dismantled the inscribed columns which he found standing in the nearby chapels of the Saite princesses, coated their drums with plaster, and recut them with his own texts. Now much of this plaster has fallen off, allowing us to read substantial parts of both the inscriptions with which they were covered. Akoris paid no attention to the order in which he reused individual column drums, so the elements of a single original column may now be scattered among the four secondary columns, sometimes right side up, sometimes upside down; but we have already begun to reconstruct the correct sequence of the Saite texts.

In the process of copying the texts of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple, we have collated all the available published and unpublished copies which were previously made in the core temple. Less than 30% of its inscriptions, and practically none of the scenes, has been published in any form; moreover, the documentation which does exist is woefully inadequate, and any conclusions based on the published copies are likely to be inaccurate.

Turning to Luxor Temple, this season we rediscovered that the decoration of the doorway between the hypostyle or portico at the south of the Court of Amenhotep III and the inner chambers of the



*Conservator Richard Jaeschke cleaning a sandstone wall in the Small Temple at Medinet Habu, using a cotton swab impregnated with a weak solution of nitric acid.  
(Photo by Susan Lezon)*



*Conservators Richard and Helena Jaeschke at work in the naos room of the Small Temple at Medinet Habu.  
(Photo by Susan Lezon)*

temple proper was restored by King Eye after its defacement by Akhenaten. In 1896, Borchardt had recognized the role of this king, Tutankhamun's successor, in the restoration of this doorway, though subsequently its decoration has been attributed exclusively to Amenhotep III. The published copy of its text inexplicably omits the beginning of the last line, completely obscuring Eye's claim to be restoring "the monuments of his father" Amenhotep III. This is the very phrase which first attracted me to it, since I have been collecting texts in which kings of the New Kingdom refer to royal predecessors as their fathers. Because Tutankhamun calls Amenhotep III "his father" nine times (eight times in the Colonnade alone), I want to establish the background against which the veracity of this statement may be judged.

The 115 new fragments which we were able to add this season to one or another of the groups we have reconstructed from the original decoration of the Colonnade and the Court of Amenhotep III, bring our total number of identifiable fragments to more than 450. In conjunction with a project of Mr. Sayid Higazy, Inspector of Luxor, Ray Johnson supervised the moving and restacking of 51 rows of fragments at the southeast of the temple area and east of the Colonnade. This is the first time Ray has been able to examine every single block in such a large area. Our new totals for established groups containing significant numbers of fragments are as follows: king with offering list before Mut (19), [king] offering before Amun and Mut (19), Amun barque procession (24) and adjoining towboats [pulling royal barque] (31), Khonsu barge with towboats (34), Min procession (60), Amenhotep III barque of Amun resting on a stand, with offerings and associated figures (99). The discovery of four new Bentresh fragments brings our total for this text, which contains one of the latest references to the Opet Festival, to 38.

Our photographer, Susan Lezon, photographed 195 fragments identified during this and previous seasons—this in the face of obstacles which included a scorpion apprehended crawling up the leg of her trousers in February! The international renown of the Epigraphic Survey's photo archive is familiar to all of our friends. Our priceless collection of more than 13,000 large-format negatives represents the most extensive photographic coverage of the monuments of ancient Thebes ever assembled. For many scenes and inscriptions, our negatives are the only available documentation which can be cited. The work of the Epigraphic Survey is based on these photographs, and they are consulted by scholars from all over the world. This season Sue examined more than 4200 of our negatives,

both nitrate-based and early safety film. She found only 15% in stable condition, with 50% of the nitrates in need of duplication as soon as possible, to minimize loss of image; she will complete her survey next season. This season she was able to duplicate only 143 of these rapidly deteriorating negatives, but these represent the most badly damaged turned up so far. Most troubling was her discovery—now being reported independently by several other photographic archives—that many of our early safety film negatives are also in need of duplication because of chemical contamination due to storage in proximity with the nitrates.

This season we accessioned more than 160 new items, in addition to current journals, in the Chicago House library. Several replacement volumes were also generously donated to us from the Edgerton book bequest. Much of the librarian's time was spent treating dry leather bindings, repairing damaged pages, and reattaching loose plates; in addition, 43 books were recased entirely. Our conservators brought our aluminum scaffolding indoors to install self-adhesive shielding material over the library windows to eliminate damage to book bindings due to the ultraviolet rays of the sun. This transparent mylar film also effectively reduces the danger of injury in case one of these large windows should ever be broken.

Because of its unique subject matter, Luxor Temple is perhaps the least known major monument in the Theban area. Progress in understanding its real significance has been seriously hampered by the general lack of reliably published documentation for the greater part of the temple. The appearance of the Epigraphic Survey's volume on the Colonnade, and the various studies related to it, will go a long way toward remedying this unfortunate situation. Up to now, knowledge of Luxor Temple at first hand has been necessary to gain any appreciable insight into its inner workings. It is only after the nine years that the Epigraphic Survey team has been working in the Colonnade that we are finally in a position to be able to offer a completely new interpretation of Luxor Temple and the Opet Festival, pieced together from personal experience and the observations of many colleagues and associates. Much work still remains to be done in refining this statement, but I believe that it represents a major breakthrough in our understanding of the cult of the divine king, even the very nature of kingship in the New Kingdom.

At the end of the Epigraphic Survey's 1981-82 season, in an effort to better understand the details of the reliefs which we had recorded in the Tutankhamun Colonnade, I made some observations concerning the possible interrelationships of a few distinctive features

of the decoration of Luxor Temple as a whole. These include the location in the first court of colossal statues of the deified Ramesses II (otherwise attested for this ruler in the Luxor area only at his mortuary temple); the fact that Alexander the Great, who considered himself the son of Zeus-Ammon, rebuilt the barque chapel at Luxor, leaving to his successor the renewal of the corresponding structure at Karnak; and the fact that the cult place of the divine Roman emperors was situated in the first vestibule south of the hypostyle.

Bill Murnane had already suggested the close association of the Opet Festival with the representations at Luxor of the divine conception and birth of Amenhotep III as the son of Amun. I was able to add a crucial reference to an inscription on an architrave in the court of that king, in which he states that he “made monuments in Luxor for the one who bore him,” describing Luxor Temple as “his place of justification, in which he becomes young (again), a palace from which he went forth in joy at the time of his appearance (as king), his transformations being in every face (i.e., visible to everyone).”

Following this lead, Bill has now made hand-copies of the inscriptions in the Birth Suite, Barque Vestibule, and Sanctuary, and has described their decoration in considerable detail. Concentrating my efforts this season on the northern part of the temple, I began my own investigation of the theological orientation of Luxor Temple by pursuing the role of the deified king in the temple as a whole. The theoretical framework derived from this study proved to be a perfect complement to Bill’s work in the inner parts of the temple. The key to finding a pattern behind all our separate observations was finally provided by my attempt to answer the nagging question of the exact nature of the manifestations of the king’s divinity in Luxor Temple; for it turns out that the king’s *ka* is the thread which ties all the loose ends together.

The king’s *ka* assumes a position of extraordinary prominence throughout Luxor Temple. In Egyptian religion the concept of the *ka* is a complex and complicated one, but it may be described for the present purpose as the divine aspect of the mortal king; and it links him both with the gods and with all his royal predecessors. The king’s *ka* is born with him, or rather it is created when he is conceived, for we see the infant *ka* depicted as his double throughout the episodes of the divine birth; and it accompanies him to the grave, as we see in the tomb of Tutankhamun. The possession of this *ka* is proof of his divine origins, and sufficient evidence that he is predestined to rule. But he becomes truly divine only when he becomes one with the royal *ka*, when his human form is overtaken by his immortal aspect, which flows

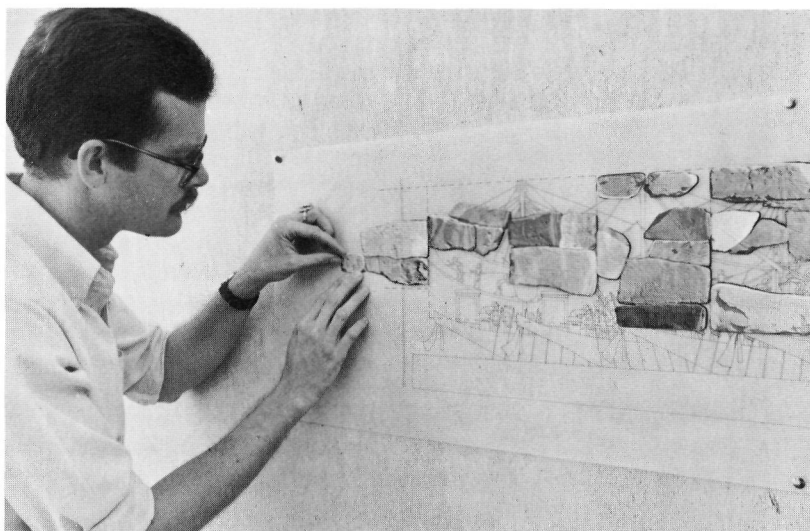


through his whole being and dwells in it. This happens at the climax of the coronation ceremony, when he assumes his rightful place on the Horus throne of the living.

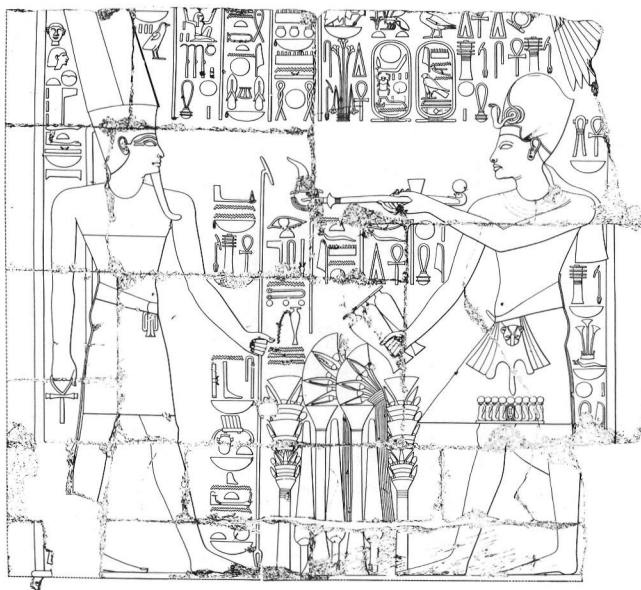
Some kings (Horemheb is a clear example) arranged to be crowned at Luxor Temple; and many kings strove to attend the Opet Festival personally. Each king's right to rule was reconfirmed at Luxor annually, by the rituals of the great royal renewal festival, the Opet celebration—distinct from, but interrelated with, the royal jubilee, the *heb-sed* or 30-year festival (usually performed at Memphis, but celebrated by Amenhotep III at Thebes, and possibly at Luxor itself) which initiated a new era or cycle in the king's reign. Luxor Temple was thus the premier national shrine dedicated to the living, divine ruler; and the preeminence of his role in its cult seems to have remained unchallenged down to the Roman period.

It is fortunate that so many major elements of the theological system of Luxor Temple are preserved to us intact, allowing us a rare insight into the functioning of an ancient Egyptian temple. The temple dates basically to a single period (from the end of Dynasty XVIII through early Dynasty XIX), and its rites seem to be mainly mono-thematic. The progression of the representations is consistent throughout the temple, and the explicit statements of the accompanying texts explain details which are only alluded to or found in isolation elsewhere. To summarize our findings: when the king approaches the god reverentially performing the rituals of the Opet Festival, his *ka* is renewed or restored. The *ka* symbolizes the legitimacy of his inheritance; and during the festival, evidence that he possesses the royal *ka* and that it resides in him—indeed, that he is the living royal *ka*—is displayed in the symbolic reenactment of his divine conception and birth, his acknowledgment by Amun-Re and recognition by the Ennead, his coronation, and the publication of his *ka*-name. But it is not the legitimization of a particular king's reign which is intended here; the temple can function in this respect for any and all kings. The enduring success of Luxor Temple as a cult place of the living king's *ka* rests in the fact that individual identity is suppressed in its ritual: the monarch grows into the unique *ka* which is shared by all the kings of Egypt and has been handed on from ruler to ruler since the creation of the universe. In contrast, the *ka* of the deceased king is manifested in his own special mortuary temple.

In the sanctuary at Luxor we are privileged to witness the final step in the king's transformation into a god. The ritual consists here of a series of offerings presented by the king before Amun. The efficacy of these offerings lies in their reciprocal nature: as the king consecrates



*Artist/Egyptologist Ray Johnson at work on a reconstruction of part of a wall of the Colonnade at Luxor Temple. (Photo by Susan Lezon)*



*Tutankhamun (his cartouches later usurped by Horemheb) offering before Amun-Re in the Colonnade at Luxor. (Drawing by Reg Coleman, Thad Rasche, and Ray Johnson)*



*Amenhotep III transfigured with incense and fresh flowers before the barque of Amun-Re at the conclusion of the offering ritual in the Sanctuary at Luxor Temple. (Photo by Charles F. Nims)*

sacrifices before the deity, so Amun responds in kind, honoring the king accordingly. The culmination of this ritual is celebrated with “incense” (*sntr*) and “(fresh) flowers” (*rnpyt*). By paranomasia, this is what the king receives as well: “becoming a god” (*sntr*) and “becoming young (again)” (*rnpy*). This scene is followed immediately by the coronation.

The divine instrument by which these miracles came to pass was Amun-Re/Kamutef, a combined form of Amun-Re of Karnak and Amun of Luxor, linking the two in a single manifestation. He is a self-generating fertility god, representing both father and son at the same time, mysteriously reborn of a union with his wife, who is really his own mother. He is related to the divine kingship as an aspect of the *ka* shared by every ruler ever to sit upon the throne of Egypt. Amun in his guise as Kamutef or Min is the progenitor par excellence; he represents the physical creator of the gods (at Medinet Habu) and the king and his *ka* (at Luxor). Whereas the nature of Amun-Re of Karnak is hidden behind his veiled naos during the processions of his barque, even the physical body of Amun/Kamutef:Min is visible to all during the procession of his portable cult statue during the Min festival. Bill Murnane has already gathered some evidence suggesting that a mystical union of Amun-Re of Karnak and Amun of Luxor was perhaps achieved in the celebration of the divine conception and birth of the king during the Opet Festival. This adds yet another facet to the wondrous occurrences which transpired at Luxor every year, with the king and his *ka* reunited while the two Amuns were undergoing a similar and simultaneous transformation.

Our professional staff for the 1982-83 season, besides myself, consisted of my wife Martha, Chicago House Librarian; Dr. William Murnane and Mr. Steven Shubert, Epigraphers; Messrs. W. Raymond Johnson and Paul Hoffman, and Mr. and Mrs. Salvatore and Barbara Garfi, Artists; Ms. Susan Lezon, Photographer; Mr. and Mrs. Richard and Helena Jaeschke, Conservators; Dr. Labib Habachi, Consulting Egyptologist; and Mr. Saleh Shehat Suleiman, Chief Engineer. In addition to those cited above in this report for their specific contributions in making this past season a success, we would also like to thank MM. Jean-Claude Golvin and Alain Bellod of the Franco-Egyptian Center at Karnak; Mr. Richard Fazzini of the Brooklyn Museum’s Mut Temple Project; Professor Ricardo Caminos of the Egypt Exploration Society’s Wadi Shatt el-Rigal Project; Ms. Diana Patch of the University of Pennsylvania’s Abydos Survey Project; Professor Joel Snyder of the University of Chicago; Mr. Geoffrey Freeman of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities; Mr.

Daniel Kolos; and Ms. May Trad. Special appreciation is due to the members of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization with whom we worked most closely and whose cooperation, support, encouragement, and friendship throughout the season have enabled us to achieve the results described above. These include Dr. Ahmed Kadry, Chairman of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization; Dr. Mutawia Balboush, Supervisor of Antiquities for Upper Egypt; Mr. Mohammed el-Sughayyir, Director of Antiquities for Southern Upper Egypt; Mr. Sayid Abd el-Hamid, Chief Inspector for Karnak and Luxor; Mr. Abd el-Hamid Marouf, Inspector at Karnak; and Mr. Mohammed Nasr, Chief Inspector of Qurna. International travel and funds for our operations in Egypt were provided by a counterpart grant from the Foreign Currency Program of the Smithsonian Institution, administered through the offices of the American Research Center in Egypt.

Not everyone is aware that we are hardly living and working in solemn and undistracted isolation at Luxor. Chicago House is a major Egyptological center in Upper Egypt, and we find many tourists drawn to our gates as well. This season, more than 400 persons signed our visitors' book. They came from 31 states of the Union and from 20 other nations; included among them were the members of the Oriental Institute's Egyptian tour and 12 other Oriental Institute members travelling individually in Egypt. We had a total of 68 resident guests, who spent altogether 372 nights with us, sharing our living accommodations and taking meals with us—averaging out to just over two guests per night over the course of our whole six-month season. They came from the United States, Egypt, Great Britain, Switzerland, West Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Canada, and Australia, and belonged to 13 Egyptological institutes, universities, museums, or archaeological missions. In addition, our library was used by scholars from France, Belgium, Poland, and Japan.

The Epigraphic Survey is the longest continually operating American archaeological expedition working in Egypt, and Chicago House is the only privately-owned American research institute located in Egypt. Through years of war, political change, and uncertain funding, the professional staff of "Chicago by the Nile" have faithfully attended to their responsibilities in producing a steady stream of volumes meticulously recording the endangered monuments of the Nile Valley. Our achievements over the years have gained for us the respect of our host country, as well as the admiration of our colleagues; and we, for our part, are proud of the long tradition which we represent, as we are proud to represent United States scholarship



*The tradition of Chicago House is upheld by these six men who have each been on the staff for more than twenty-five years: the father of Sayid (third from the right) worked for the Epigraphic Survey before him; the son of Shafei (third from the left) also assists him in the house. (Photo by Susan Lezon)*

abroad. Remarkably well designed and ideally suited to serve as headquarters for the Epigraphic Survey, Chicago House has recently celebrated its golden anniversary. As the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the Epigraphic Survey itself approaches, it is timely to reflect that both the Epigraphic Survey and Chicago House have successfully met the challenge of the years time and again, proving once more that old is not necessarily antiquated or outmoded.

Let me take this opportunity to repeat our sincere invitation to all members and friends of the Oriental Institute who plan to visit Luxor during our season to include a stop at Chicago House in your itinerary. All we ask is that you let us know your plans, even tentatively, as far ahead as possible, so we can prepare our best welcome for you.



