

## THE LUXOR-FARSHÛT DESERT ROAD SURVEY

John Coleman Darnell and Deborah Darnell

During the 1993–1994 season, the Luxor-Farshût Desert Road Survey continued work on the main road and began investigations of subsidiary and related routes. The sites examined this season were located on the primary track which ascends “Gebel Antef” (as we refer to the apparently unnamed tongue of gebel overlooking the northern branch of the Western Valley of the Kings; see map) and returns to the valley floor at the Wadi el-Hôl, as well as along the ‘Alamat Tal Road, the Darb Ba‘irat, and the path leading up to and continuing behind the Thoth Mountain.

### Gebel Antef

We located further fragments of the Seventeenth Dynasty chapel that we discovered on Gebel Antef during our initial surveys of the road (see our report on the 1992–1993 season in last year’s *Annual Report*). One of our major finds last season was a portion of the sandstone doorjamb of this shrine, preserving the cartouches of a King Antef and a King Sobekemsaf; the orthography of the nomen Antef pointed to King Nubkheperre Antef V, an identification confirmed by a grafito documented this past season. On a sandstone block of the temple, we found a crude representation of a falcon atop a serekh, containing the vestiges of the Horus name of Antef V, Neferkheperew, “Perfect of Manifestations.”

A notable addition to the remains of the chapel is a large block, a sliver of the lintel of the doorway. This fragment, apparently flaked off the bottom of the lintel, preserves a portion of the throne of a seated deity, identified as Osiris in a portion of a vertical column of text behind the throne. Another piece of the doorjamb bears the remnants of hieroglyphs that appear to belong to the epithet of Osiris as Khentimentiyew, “Foremost of the Westerners.” These bits of inscription suggest that the deity to whom the shrine was dedicated was the Abydene Osiris, an appropriate dedication since one of the forks of this desert track led to Abydos.

To the votive objects discovered in the area of the temple last season, we can add the tiny, shattered fragments of a steatite statuette, possibly the figure of a falcon, found nearby this season. No doubt many other small objects originally left in and around the temple have been carried off by travelers on the road.

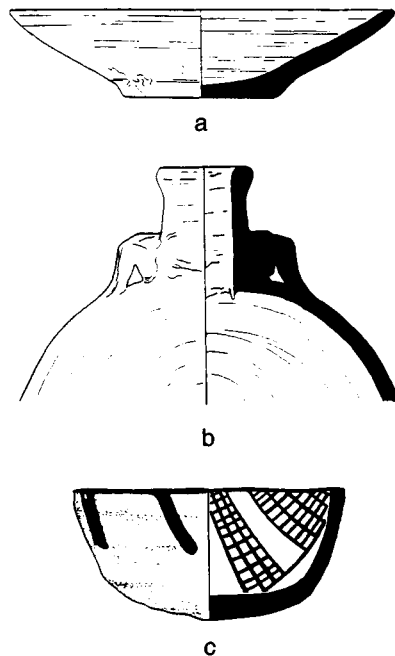
During our first survey we found several pieces of a broken stela dating to the

early Third Intermediate Period. As a result of investigations in the archives of the Egypt Exploration Society in London, we now know that the Mond Desert Expedition discovered a stela similar to the fragmentary Gebel Antef stela on the high desert over Armant, along the Armant to Nag<sup>ḥ</sup> Hammadi Road. That unpublished stela has the same date as the stela on Gebel Antef, and the text, though also very fragmentary, contains many of the same terms as the Gebel Antef stela. Both stelae attest to activity in the Western Desert during the early Third Intermediate Period and recall other evidence of similar activity at that time, such as the Banishment Stela, and the fortresses of the high priest Menkheperre at the Nile termini of desert roads. Both stelae mention a “road of horses,” a new feature of the Theban desert gazetteer.

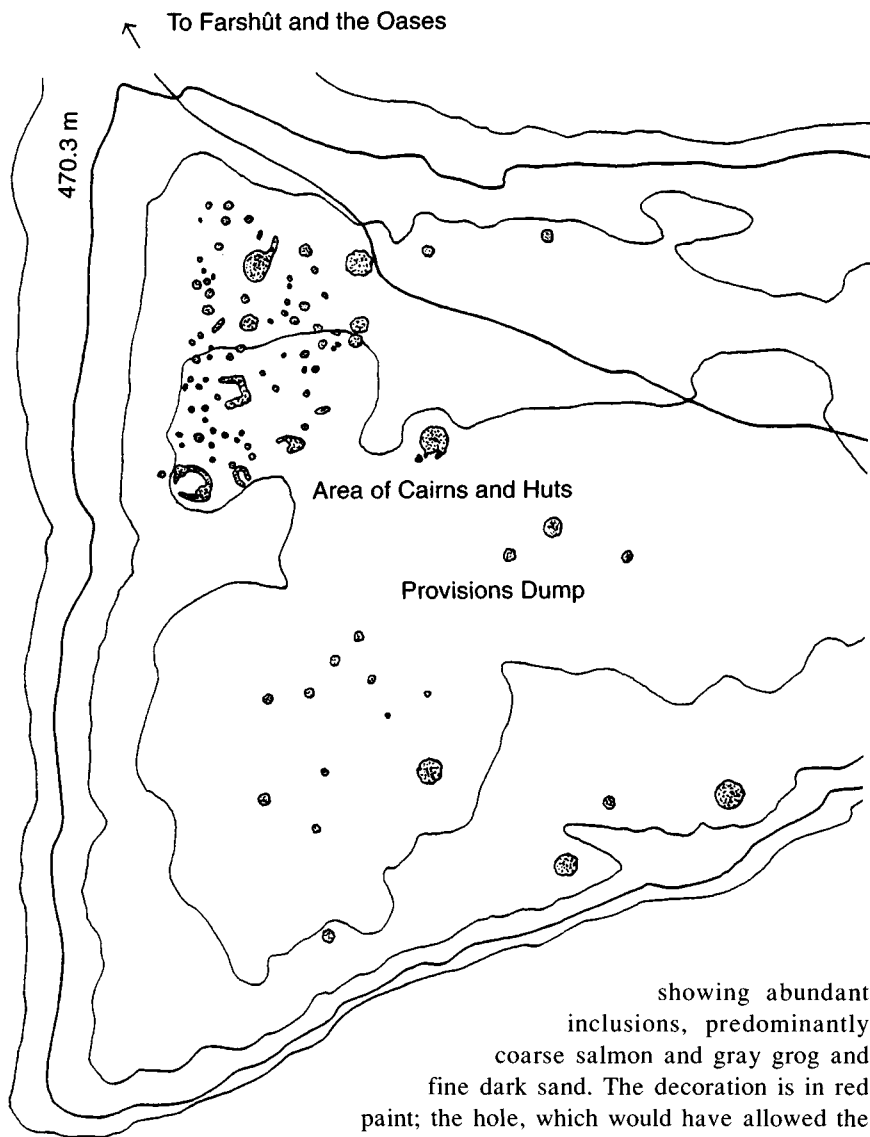
Behind the chapel area mapped last season, we completed surveying the forest of votive cairns and drystone shrines on the back portions of the Gebel Antef promontory. As part of our investigation of several sites located along the road farther to the northwest, we made an initial study of a

group of drystone huts with walls preserved in some places to a height of sixty centimeters. Pottery of the pharaonic and Graeco-Roman periods was evident in and around the structures. Farther back on the road we also continued to study two drystone “dolmen”-shrines overlooking the low desert area of Kom el-Abd and Kom el-Ahmar; the shrines are located a few meters to the south of the road where it skirts the head of the Wadi Agala. Associated ceramic evidence, including a fine blue-painted vessel, suggests a late Eighteenth Dynasty date for these constructions. In appearance and location they closely parallel a large group of rough stone shrines, dated to the Ramesside period, which Norman and Nina Davies discovered on the side of the Qurn during the 1930s.

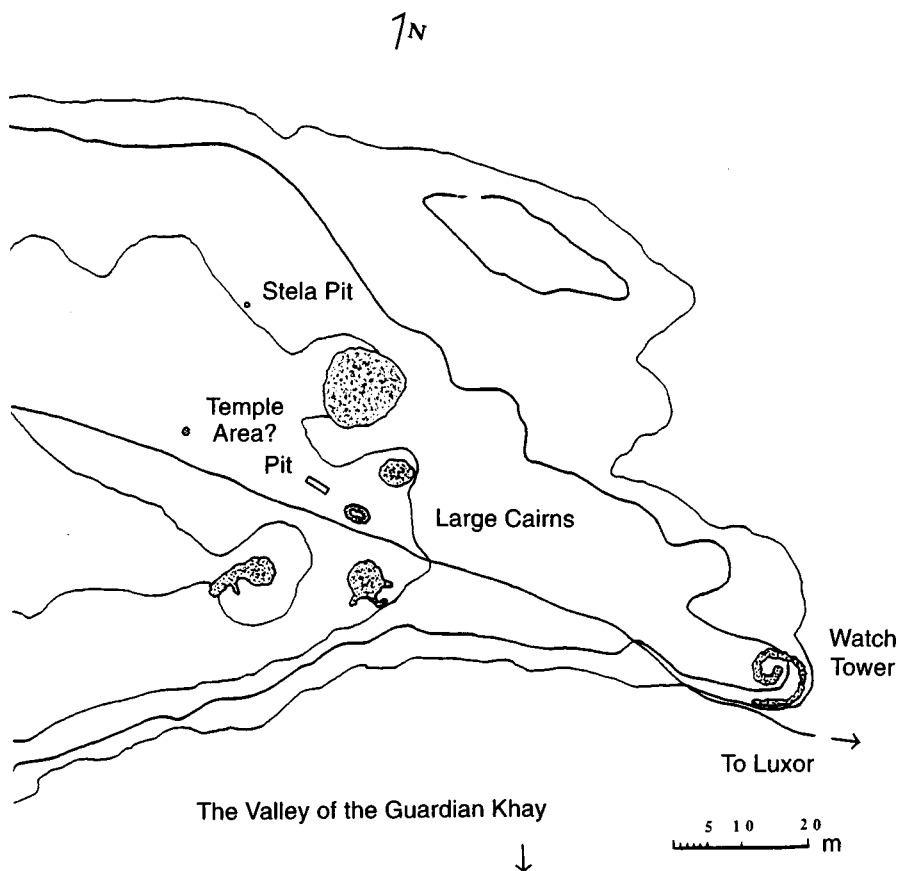
The ceramic remains at Gebel Antef point to two periods of intense desert traffic along the road—late Second Intermediate Period to early New Kingdom, and the Saite Period, with much of the Saite traffic related to the oases. We have continued to find remarkably large quantities of pilgrim flasks (fig. 1b), “gourds,” and barrel-shaped water jars made of various types of oasis ware, reinforcing the view that the Farshût Road is the ancient Theban link to the oases alluded to in ancient documents but never clearly identified. Although fragments of vessels from the Second Intermediate Period to early Eighteenth Dynasty are most abundant, occurring in many loci, the later ceramic material is also quite fascinating. Most intriguing is a type we have termed “desert ware,” which often takes the form of handmade bowls such as the one depicted in figure 1c. This particular example was coil-made; the paste has a dull gray-buff exterior with a bright orange fracture



**Figure 1.** (a) Bowl with string-cut base from the ‘Alamat Tal, late Second Intermediate Period to early Eighteenth Dynasty; (b) Pilgrim flask of the Twenty-Fifth Dynasty from Gebel Antef, Oasis ware; and (c) “Desert ware” bowl from the Darb Ba‘irat



showing abundant inclusions, predominantly coarse salmon and gray grog and fine dark sand. The decoration is in red paint; the hole, which would have allowed the cup to be strung up for transport, was made prior to firing. We have found vessels of this and related types on the main Farshût Road, the Darb Ba'irat, and the approach to the Thoth Mountain; we have seen such pottery on auxiliary tracks out of Armant and in the walls of reused portions of the Colonnade Hall at Luxor Temple. Similar vessels have been found in Theban tombs, at the Seti Qurna Temple, and in the High Desert over Armant, but the ceramic type has never before been fully analyzed or firmly dated, though it appears to date from between the twelfth century A.D. and the early modern period. Many of our examples are of a paste which bears a strong resemblance to oasis ware; these may have been manufactured in the oases or in the Western Desert. We hope that continued study of this most interesting type will clarify some of the problems regarding its origin and use and perhaps shed light on the movements of early Bedouin groups in the region of the Qena Bend.



*Map of Gebel Antef, the area of the Seventeenth Dynasty chapel discovered during the first season of the Luxor-Farshût Desert Road Survey; an overview based on the maps made during the first season of the survey (the contour lines are based on those on the 1:5,000 scale, photogrammetric map of the Theban necropoleis, from Graffiti de la montagne thébaine, I: Cartographie et étude topographique illustrée, by J. Černý et al. [Cairo: Centre de Documentation et d'Études sur l'Antienne Égypte, 1969], pl. II, "carte des vallées de la montagne occidentale de Thebes") (continues from opposite page)*

### The Wadi el-Hôl

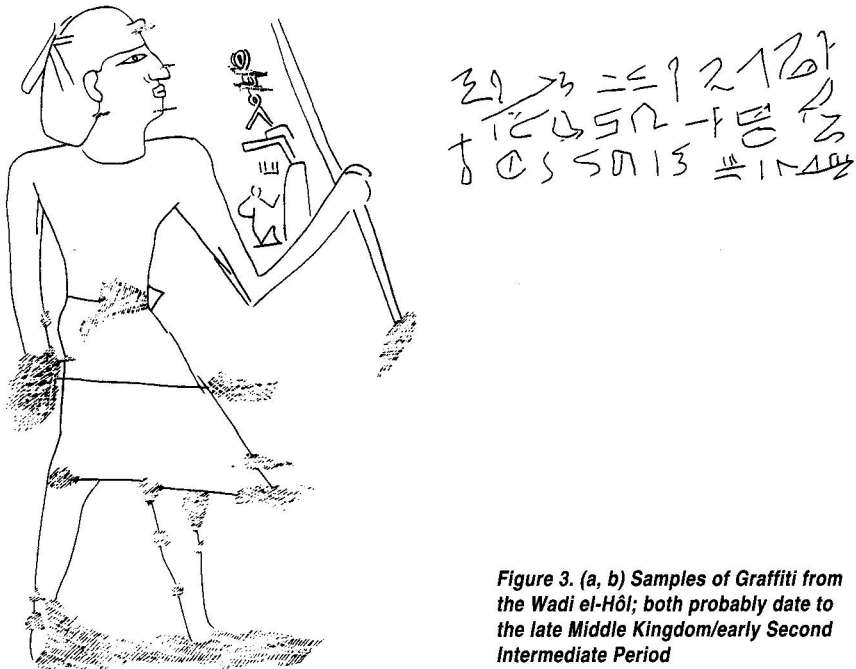
Near the middle of the Farshût Road, where the main track descends the cliffs behind El-Halfaya, we began work in the Wadi el-Hôl, an area of extensive graffiti. These graffiti include texts from the reigns of Amenemhat III, Sobekhotep III, and Amenhotep II. Many of these graffiti were discovered by the Mond Desert Expedition in the 1930s, but none were ever published. In addition to the graffiti that were located in the 1930s, we have thus far identified at least one new concentration of pharaonic graffiti at the site. Thanks to the indispensable help of Richard Jasnow and Tina Di Cerbo, we were able to copy more than twenty-five graffiti during the past season (fig. 2), and we hope to visit the site to collate these graffiti and copy other texts and scenes on several occasions during the third season. Though it is far removed from the cultivation, vandals have recently attacked the site and have completely destroyed a number of inscriptions. We hope within the next few seasons of work in the Wadi el-Hôl to prepare all of the significant graf-



**Figure 2. Epigraphy in the Wadi el-Hôl: graffiti sector C, near the “spending the day” text (left to right, Tina Di Cerbo, Richard Jasnow, John Darnell)**

fiti for publication and to record as many as possible. Many of the texts date to the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties, although there are a number of later graffiti.

Figure 3a shows one of the graffiti from the area that we discovered this season, the drawing—somewhat crude but full of character—of the man Ḥepi. This man gives no title for himself; many of the other graffiti are those of people who term themselves simply “scribe,” suggesting a continuous and extensive use of the road by “private” individuals and lower level officials (lack of specific titles might indicate a date in the Seventeenth Dynasty, when titles underwent considerable changes; the prosopography of the graffiti examined thus far, however, suggests



**Figure 3. (a, b) Samples of Graffiti from the Wadi el-Hôl; both probably date to the late Middle Kingdom/early Second Intermediate Period**

the Thirteenth Dynasty as the most likely date for many of these texts). In this there is somewhat of a contrast with the graffiti from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties at Wadi el-Hudi, in the Wadi Hammamat, and in the Sinai, where records of large, official expeditions predominate. Figure 3b gives the two lines of an hieratic inscription that reads:

“Regnal Year 17, first month of the Shemu season, day 17: Spending the day by the scribe Monthuhotep beneath this mountain on holiday ...”

The ceramics at the site correspond well with those discovered at the Theban terminus of the road and—as at the Theban terminus—include a number of vessels clearly made in the oases of the Western Desert. At a point between the Wadi el-Hôl and Halfaya Bahri, where several other tracks join the Farshût Road, we located the extensive remains of a caravan rest stop, with a large mound of pottery over two and one half meters deep (fig. 4). There and at the Wadi el-Hôl, thieves have cut large trenches into the mounds of ancient debris, but much material remains, and much information may yet be salvaged from these vandalized sites. The profiles revealed by the destructive acts show layer after layer of potsherds and organic remains, including dung, ash, and possibly animal fodder. Late Second Intermediate Period to early Eighteenth Dynasty sherds can be seen projecting from a middle level of one of the cuts; the depth of the deposit is as yet unknown.

Based on the epigraphic evidence, there was heavy traffic through the Wadi el-Hôl during the Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties, and a certain amount of activity from the early New Kingdom through the early Islamic period. Although from the pottery we know that there were visitors during the Seventeenth Dynasty, they appear to have left no texts. Perhaps during the troubled time of the Theban/Hyksos wars, what traffic there was on the road did not have the leisure to “spend the day” carving names and dates on the rocks; much of the traffic may in fact have been



**Figure 4.** Deborah Darnell and Inspector Ramadan Ahmed Ali examine potsherds in a robber's cutting at a caravan stop between the Wadi el-Hôl and el-Halfaya

military and police patrols, and many of the members of these desert patrols may have been Nubian auxiliaries, perhaps not yet so Egyptianized as to be able to immortalize themselves through written graffiti. Near the cartouches of Amenhotep II there is a drawing of a man holding a round-topped shield in one hand and a bundle of spears in the other—he may be one of the unlabeled memorials to this exciting and pugacious time.

### The ‘Alamat Tal

On the “‘Alamat Tal” Road located to the north of the Thoth Mountain, before now indicated in part only on the old Schweinfurth map of Western Thebes, we identified and mapped the remains of two rubble and mudbrick structures, apparently once watch towers along the ancient caravan route (fig. 5). On the basis of pottery, including fragments incorporated within the bricks, we can date the structures to the late Second Intermediate Period.



**Figure 5.** The rubble and brick remains of the two Second Intermediate Period towers overlooking the caravan tracks through the ‘Alamat Tal; the stone-edged ancient road leads up to the southern tower

Such round towers are depicted in objects from the early Old Kingdom, are apparently described in the Prophecy of Neferty, and their descendants were depicted by Napoleon’s savants in the *Description de l’Égypte* (as a pair, like those on the ‘Alamat Tal Road). The towers appear to have rested on brick platforms built atop the desert surface, with large boulders interspersed among the bricks (suggestive of roughly contemporary brick casemate-and-rubble foundations at Ballas); a glaciais of rough stones surrounds the base of each tower. The bricks were bonded by patties of mud placed over the joins of bricks (fig. 6), a water-saving technique of mortar application that appears in the construction of the Se‘ankhkare chapel and in the vaults of the Ramesseum’s storerooms.

As the ancient nome boundary also once ran near this site, roughly parallel to the caravan route, it is conceivable that these structures were customs houses. We identified the faint but broad sweep of tracks continuing behind the brick and rubble structures, and sampled pottery in the area of the towers and along the road. Though some Roman and Christian sherds were present in certain areas, initial sampling shows a predominance (at least 6:1) of Second Intermediate Period to New Kingdom remains (fig. 1a). During the coming season we hope to follow this unmapped track to the point where it ascends the gebel behind Naqada. Based on what we have encountered thus far, it is impossible not to be optimistic about what we may find.

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### The Darb Ba‘irat

The Darb Ba‘irat, beginning to the south of the Qurn and joining the Farshût Road several kilometers back on the plateau, is a longer and in general less steep ascent to the high desert, which appears to have been used during all periods from as early as the Second Intermediate Period. In contrast to the main Luxor-Farshût

Road, the Darb Ba‘irat was most heavily trafficked during the Graeco-Roman Period. The explanation for this perhaps lies in the angles of ascent of the roads. During the pharaonic age, desert travel was primarily on foot with donkey trains; steep paths are no deterrent to men and donkeys, who would have preferred the conveniently located, though steep, main road. The camel came to predominate in desert travel during the Late Period; the camel prefers gentle ascents and descents, such as the somewhat out-of-the-way Darb Ba‘irat offers.

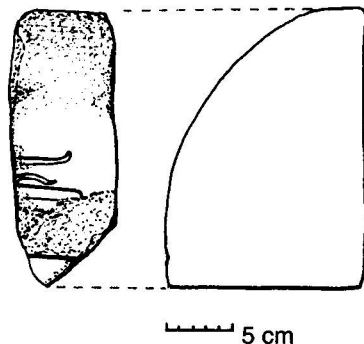


**Figure 6.** Standing in a robber's pit in the southern tower in the 'Alamat Tal, John Darnell examines bricks incorporating fragments of Second Intermediate Period pottery with round patties of mortar

### The Thoth Mountain

One of the most distinctive features one notices on the approach to the Thoth Mountain is the network of low, drystone walls running along the slopes of the gebel. Similar walls may be found in the wadi between the Thoth Mountain and the Farshût Road, crossing the beginning of the Farshût Road, and along the approach to the plateau in the Armant desert, in association with the Darb Armant. We are currently studying the significance of these features. The track behind the Thoth Mountain temple does not appear on any maps. This path joins the main Luxor-Farshût Road and closely parallels the main road in having a temple located atop the high desert at the Luxor terminus. From our initial investigations, this track appears to have been the least heavily used of the roads that we have thus far examined. Yet it is one of the more well-marked roads away from the edge of the escarpment: an intervisible series of pairs of cairns guides the traveler across the featureless plateau. The relatively sparse ceramic remains do attest to some use at many periods, with the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period predominating. Near the beginning of the road we discovered several limestone fragments of the Eleventh Dynasty chapel, including an architectural element preserving a portion of the name "the Behdetite," the name of the winged sun disk (fig. 7), the lower part of a winged sun disk, and a bit of inscription that provides the link between two fragments published (separately) at the beginning of this century.

In addition to continuing our work in the areas described above, we have visited several very promising sites in the Armant desert on which formal work will commence next season. These include the Darb Rayayna and its subsidiary tracks.



**Figure 7.** A limestone fragment belonging to the Se'ankhkare temple with a portion of the hieroglyphic label "the Behdetite"



The members of the Luxor-Farshût Desert Road Survey during the second season were John Coleman Darnell and Deborah Darnell. We were joined by Mr. Ramadan Ahmed Aly as representative of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization, a cheerful and valuable addition to our staff. Dr. Peter F. Dorman, Field Director of the Epigraphic Survey, has again earned our heartfelt gratitude for sponsoring and assisting this project. We thank Dr. M. Abd el-Halim Nur El-Din, Chairman of the Egyptian Antiquities Organization for his support. We would like to thank Dr. Mohammed es-Saghir, Supervisor of Antiquities for Upper Egypt for his continued interest, advice, and help. We thank Dr. Mohammed Nasr, Chief Inspector of Qurna, for his assistance. Once again, Helen and Jean Jacquet of the Karnak-Nord expedition offered valuable advice on ceramic analysis, surveying, and architecture, for which we are extremely grateful. Dr. Colin Hope contributed his detailed knowledge of blue painted ceramics and oasis wares, and Dr. Donald Whitcomb has continued to provide advice on Islamic remains. We thank Dr. Stephen Quirke for his interest and advice, particularly as regards the prosopography of the visitors to the Wadi el-Hôl. As before, Dr. Anthony Leahy, Dr. Patricia Spencer, and the staff of the London office of the Egypt Exploration Society allowed us to consult their files and extended to us every courtesy. We also thank Barbara Adams, Peter Clayton, Dr. Vivian Davies, Renée Friedman, and Dr. Raymond Tindel. Ms. Margaret Drower, epigrapher with the Mond Desert Expedition, graciously reminisced with us about her work on texts from the Wadi el-Hôl and offered much encouragement. Fuad Abd el-Wahab, a former workman with the Mond Desert Expedition in the 1930s, hiked with us in the gebel behind Armant and shared with us his knowledge of sites, sadly unpublished and now much plundered, on which he worked as a boy. Thanks go to Dr. Henri Riad, resident Egyptologist at Chicago House, for his continuing encouragement. Director Mohammed Saleh and Mlle. May Trad have helped us in searching through the records of the Cairo Museum. Dr. Ahmed Moussa and Dr. Yehia Eid were helpful during a visit to the beginning of the South Saqqara to Fayyum road. Special thanks to Tina Di Cerbo, Richard Jasnow, and the others who accompanied us on several of our desert trips, and who contributed to the recognition of important surface remains: Paul Bartko, Drew Baumann, and Nan and David Ray. The professional help of photographer Jerry Kobylecky was much appreciated. As always, many thanks go to Director Mark Easton, Assistant Directors Amira Khattab and Ibrahim Sadek, and all the staff at the American Research Center in Egypt, Cairo. The friendship of Peter and Ginny Manoogian will always be valued; we thank them for their generous hospitality in Cairo, a significant form of support for our work. The contributions of Di and Kelley Grodzins and Ms. Valerie Fargo are heartily appreciated.

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