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Lanny Bell

The Epigraphic Survey

The 1979–80 season of the Epigraphic Survey marked the successful completion of a number of long-term projects as well as the initiation of work at the site of Medinet Habu, which will be the focus of the Survey's activities for a number of future seasons. Our season opened with the long-awaited publication of *Khonsu I* and will close with the appearance of *Kheruef*, which is presently in press. In addition, the publication of *Khonsu II* is now in the final stages of editing. These volumes of drawings represent the first publications by the Survey to appear in nearly a decade.

As reported in last year's annual report, our previous season was dominated by tragedy and crisis. The accomplishments of our present season allow us to view our future with greater assurance than was possible before. Our grant from the Smithsonian Institution, making up the bulk of our operating funds in Egyptian currency, will certainly continue through the next five years. Although last season's passing of Hagg Ibrahim, our foreman of long standing, still had its effect upon the daily running of Chicago House, the negative impact of this change was considerably lessened by the efforts of Mr. Saleh Shehat Suleiman, our Chief Engineer. Also vital in this transition was the work of my wife, Martha, who, as always, succeeded in making Chicago House an inviting home for both residents and visitors. Other members of the staff for our fifty-sixth season included William Murnane, Bernard Fishman, and Peter Piccione, as Epigraphers; Richard Turner, Thad Rasche, Ray Johnson, and Anna Turner, as Artists; Karen Krause as Photographer; Elizabeth Piccione as Librarian; and Labib Habachi as Field Consultant.

Thanks to a special grant from the Smithsonian Institution, we have been able to accomplish most of the necessary repairs to the physical fabric of Chicago House. In January the heating system for the library building was overhauled. The inconvenience of the resulting torn-up floors was more than compensated for by the welcome availability of heat in offices and studios, allowing the work of the Survey to continue without interruption. Reconstitution of the plumbing and wiring systems proved more difficult and required my pre-

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sence at Chicago House for three months beyond the normal end of the field season on April 15. Although some renovation remains to be done, the possibility of sudden breakdowns in vital building systems is no longer a serious threat.

A generous private grant enabled us to accelerate the conservation and repair of our 15,000 library items, which constitute one of the finest Egyptological libraries in the world. We inaugurated a program of permanently monitoring the temperature and humidity in the library rooms, and purchased shielding material to apply to the windows and so reduce the damage to our books from ultraviolet light. In addition to having over 290 volumes bound or rebound, we secured the services of Mrs. Danielle Zartman, who for three weeks in January and February applied special measures of conservation to forty-six of our antique folio volumes which were in particularly desperate condition. We are also indebted to Ms. May Trad, formerly Librarian at Chicago House, who took time off from her duties at the American Research Center in Cairo to assist us in numerous ways.

Work continued to salvage our invaluable photographic archive. The breakdown of the naturally unstable materials of which the old negatives are made has necessitated the copying of these negatives while they still exist, and this season saw the rescue of one hundred fifty of the most urgent of these.

During this season we completed nearly all the work remaining to be done in the colonnade of the Luxor temple, which for seasons past has absorbed the attention of the Survey. The last of the colonnade's majestic columns were recorded in accordance with the final perfection of our technique allowing the accurate two-dimensional reproduction of their immense curved surfaces. The highest preserved scenes in the colonnade, on the facade of its northern gateway and within it on the eastern wall, were completed. Three effaced scenes flanking the northern gateway were laboriously reconstructed on the basis of traces still remaining beneath the reliefs by which these scenes were replaced. We can now accurately reconstruct the appearance of the colonnade's entrance as it was at the time of its construction in the late Eighteenth Dynasty, prior to its drastic alteration through the addition of Ramesside structures.

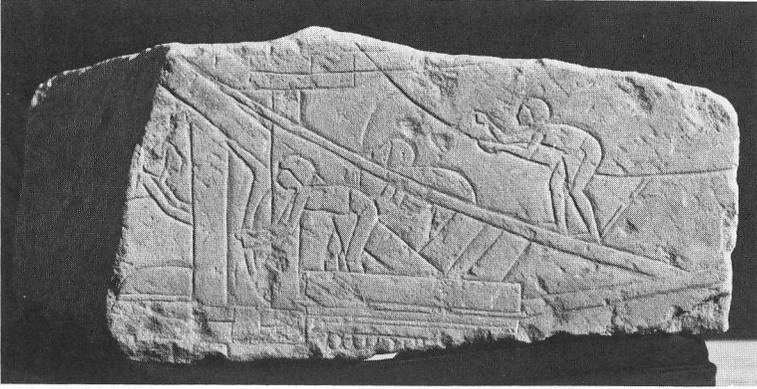
Within the colonnade, approximately 60% of an effaced inscription of the Nineteenth Dynasty pharaoh Merneptah was restored from traces lying beneath another text, itself damaged, of the Twentieth Dynasty pharaoh Ramesses IV. Of special interest was the recovery of two painted scenes (one of them outlined in relief) placed upon the thickness of the southern gateway leading from the colonnade into the

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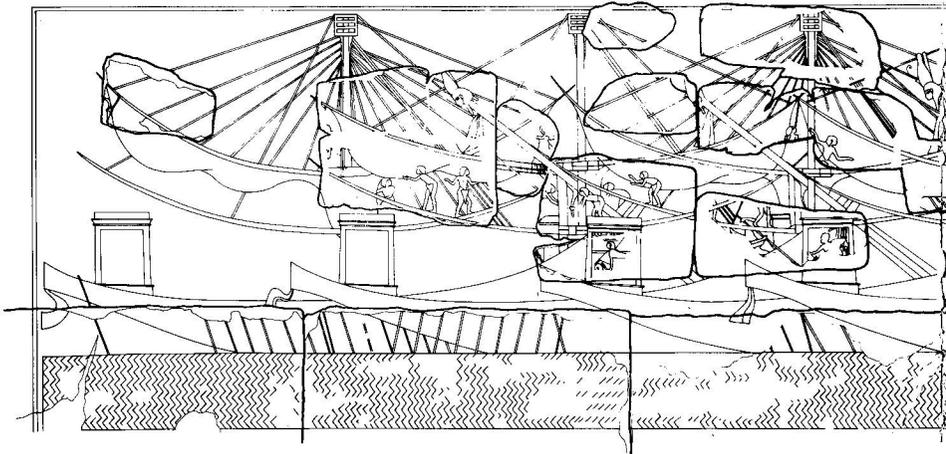
Epigrapher at work in the colonnade at Luxor (photo by Bernard Fishman)

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Fragment from boat procession, originally on the west wall of the Luxor colonnade (photo by Karen Krause)

court of Amenhotep III. Weathered almost to the point of disappearance, these painted scenes had defied earlier attempts to bring them out through the use of ultraviolet light or illumination through particularly powerful spotlights. Success was finally achieved through the use of immense patience and the dabbing of minute amounts of grain alcohol. The scenes were revealed to depict the Roman emperor Tiberius offering fields to the god Amun, and now constitute the first direct evidence within the temple for the restoration work which

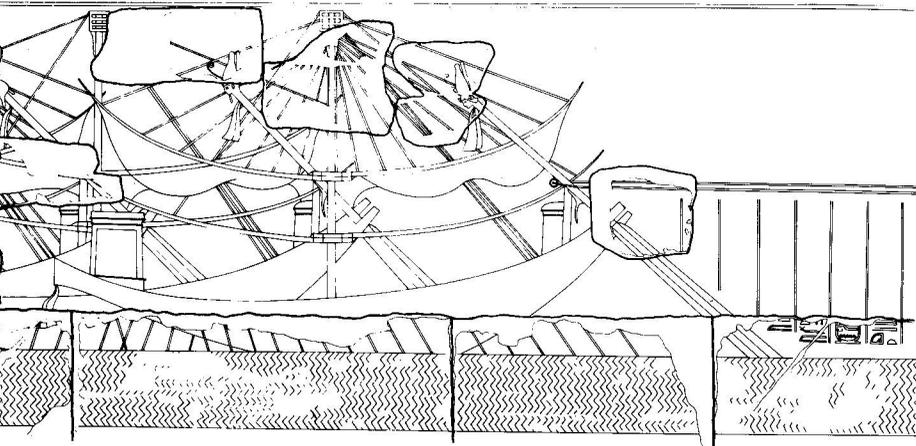


Preliminary reconstruction of part of the boat procession on the west wall of the Luxor colonnade: blocks in situ are on the bottom, and the fragments are floated in on top (drawing by Ray Johnson)

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Tiberius claims, on stelas found outside, to have accomplished there. In recording this material, we were able to correct and expand the extraordinarily garbled copies by the nineteenth-century French archeologist Gayet, whose work was the only documentation for these scenes until now.

The most dramatic results of the season were achieved with scattered blocks which were once part of the now denuded walls flanking the colonnade. These blocks, and thousands of others, had been dismantled and reused in post-pharaonic times, and had been retrieved and stacked up by four generations of modern archeologists. Last season, some two hundred fifty blocks, or fragments, had been identified as having come from the colonnade, and were rescued from anonymity. An additional thirty were discovered this season, when the task of trying to combine the fragments into scenes, or join them to still standing portions of walls, began. Eventually, approximately one third of the fragments were joined into larger units, with the largest group, containing about twenty pieces, constituting a scene on the west wall of the colonnade depicting a number of tugs drawing the divine barques in the festival of Opet. Other reconstructed scenes show processions of priests, representations of buildings, and texts of offering lists. In all cases the lengthy burial of the fragments has resulted in the preservation of considerably more painted detail on them than survives on the standing temple walls, which were subjected to a greater degree of erosion. We have thus not only restored scenes



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which have been lost for two thousand years, but have gained greater understanding of the original decorative program employed in the colonnade.

With our tasks at Luxor drawing to a close, we were finally able to begin recording the largely unpublished Eighteenth Dynasty temple at Medinet Habu, across the river. Our rebuilt Land Rover, at last serviceable, was transported to the West Bank, where work began in March. The resumption of our efforts at Medinet Habu marks the beginning of the final stage in the publication of the entire temple complex there, which began with the founding of the Survey in 1924, and has so far produced eight volumes of drawings.

The Franco-Egyptian Center at Karnak continued to extend to us its generous cooperation in the revision and publication of the former Survey Director Harold Nelson's work in the great Hypostyle Hall. We hope that by next season the checking of the reliefs in the Hall can be completed, and that a search can be started to discover new blocks, of relevance to a second volume of Nelson's drawings of the reliefs. The first volume, we are happy to say, is even now in press. In addition, a related project, the recording of the battle reliefs of pharaoh Seti I on the north wall of the Hypostyle Hall, has been completed and is now being readied for publication.

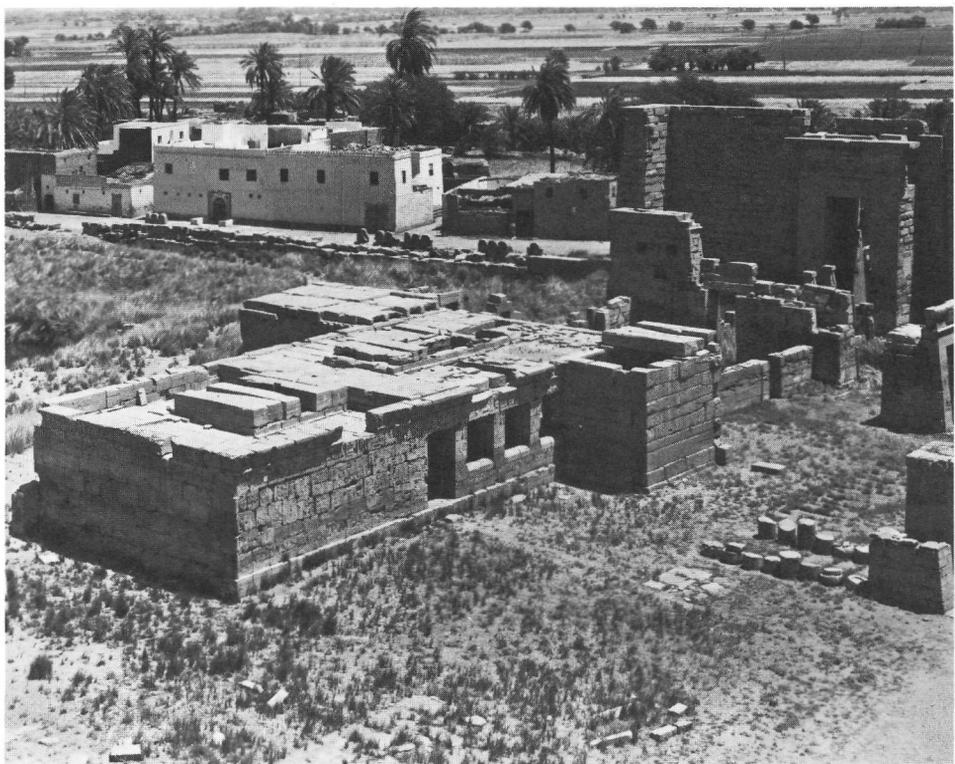
One of Chicago House's important functions is to extend the use of its facilities to visiting scholars, and other Egyptological expeditions. This season we welcomed the members of the Oriental Institute's Quseir Project, who made use of the House as a base camp. The Project kindly invited us to see its own site, and so the Survey staff spent a weekend at the Red Sea, during which time we were able to visit the pharaonic quarries in the Wadi Hammamat, which had only just been opened to unrestricted traffic. From the University of Pennsylvania came the members of the Pennsylvania-Yale expedition to Abydos, who stayed with us for nearly two weeks in December. Also from Pennsylvania was the Geological Survey group under Dr. Henry Faul. The expedition to Hierakonpolis, under the auspices of Vassar College and the American Museum of Natural History in New York, spent time at Chicago House at both the beginning and the end of its field season. For the Egypt Exploration Society's expedition to Qasr Ibrim in Nubia, we arranged local transportation and served as a storage depot. And for three months Dr. Ricardo Caminos used Chicago House as a staging area for his work at Gebel es-Silsila.

Among our numerous visiting scholars were Messrs. T. G. H. James and W. V. Davies from the British Museum; Mrs. Barbara Adams from the University College Petrie Collection in London; Mr.

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Tom Logan from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; Dr. Herman te Velde from the University of Groningen; and Prof. Jürgen von Beckerath from the University of Münster. For the first time we were visited by an Israeli scholar, Dr. Anson Rainey from Tel Aviv University. We also welcomed the first Israeli tour to Egypt, consisting of students and scholars from Tel Aviv University, including Prof. Raphael Giveon and Dr. Mordechai Gilula. In addition, some half a dozen research fellows of the American Research Center in Egypt used Chicago House as a center for research in and around Luxor.

Our research facilities were employed on a regular basis by various expeditions with their own permanent headquarters in the Luxor area. These included the Brooklyn Museum expedition working at the Mut temple at Karnak; the mission of the Polish Academy of Scien-



*The small temple at Medinet Habu where the Survey will work in the coming season
(photo by Karen Krause)*

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ces at Deir el-Bahri; the Franco-Egyptian Center at Karnak; the French Institute at Karnak North; the German Institute at Qurna on the West Bank; and the Egyptian Department of Antiquities. Altogether, it was a season which emphasized the role of Chicago House as a focal point for the activities of international Egyptology.

There were even some events this season which provided unexpected diversions. For two hours one afternoon, Chicago House was transformed into a Hollywood stage set, as movie cameras filmed a brief scene for American television beneath our processional avenue of palm trees. Later in the season, the request to use our aluminum scaffolding by the movie company filming the feature motion picture *Sphinx* had to be denied, because the rig was still in use on the last column in the Luxor colonnade.

It is with great pleasure that we once again acknowledge the cooperation and assistance of the officials of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities in Cairo and Luxor, especially Mr. Mohammed el-Sughayyir, Director of Antiquities for Southern Upper Egypt; the members of the Franco-Egyptian Center at Karnak, in particular MM. J.-Cl. Golvin, Cl. Traunecker, A. Bellod, and M. Wutman; Drs. Werner Kaiser and Rainer Stadelmann of the German Archeological Institute in Cairo; Dr. William Peck of the Detroit Institute of Arts; and the American Research Center in Egypt.

We were pleased this season to see a number of individual members of the Oriental Institute, in addition to the Oriental Institute's Egyptian Tour. To all those who have provided their help and support this year, we extend our heartfelt thanks.

We hope that any of our friends who find themselves in Luxor will pay us a visit.