

CHICAGO HOUSE BULLETIN

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CHICAGO HOUSE SEASON OCTOBER 2009 TO APRIL 2010: A SEASON DIARY

October

We are back in the saddle once again for our 2009–2010 field season in Luxor and have found the city unusually lively for this time of year. Shortly after we arrived, a contingent from the Government of Egypt (GOE) came for a review of the Luxor development project, so the whole town had to be prepared, as is always the case with VIP visits, which included painting the curbstones alternating black and white, street banners, and so on. After that, on October 20th USAID Egypt hosted a formal inauguration of the west bank dewatering program, which I was pleased to attend. It was a joyous affair in a huge tent set up alongside the Ramesseum, one of the sites that will be protected from high-groundwater salt decay by the dewatering system once it is activated in 2010. Afterward, American Research Center in Egypt Director Gerry Scott, ARCE Luxor Associate Director John Shearman, and I took around a contingent of our USAID friends on a review of USAID-supported projects in Luxor, ending up at Luxor Temple for a look at the current work there. Word is that the GOE has decided to dismantle the entire Corniche boulevard west of Luxor Temple and will replace it with a pedestrian walkway. This plan requires the old Corniche entryway be closed, and a new entrance to the Luxor Temple precinct be opened up on the eastern, city side of the temple. We found the construction of the new entrance well underway, along the ramp leading up to the cafe area, with a new security building built parallel to the ramp and just outside the sanctuary of the St. Thecla Church. The church is one of our future projects, near the unexcavated section of Roman mudbrick enclosure wall that abuts the eastern Luxor Temple pylon that we will be cleaning and restoring with ARCE this season. This week, I finished a round of talks with the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and ARCE that will allow us to move forward on this project, in coordination with the new SCA/GOE plan for that area.

There were some surprises at Khonsu Temple as well. We found that the SCA has excavated the open area in the forecourt and exposed more reused blocks that we have the responsibility to record as part of ARCE's documentation and restoration program, so the epigraphic team (Brett McClain,

Jen Kimpton, Keli Alberts, and I) hit the ground running. The work of the SCA archaeologists — old friends Moaman Saad and Shima Montasser (now engaged to be married!) — revealed that the post-Pharaonic Coptic community living in the temple had removed the floor blocks and dug a deep pit in the center of the court, function unknown. On the last scheduled day of work, they found the reason. At three and a half meters down they discovered a lined well — a major piece of the puzzle, that explains the pit and missing paving. SCA Luxor Director Mansour Boraik tells me that the work will continue a few more days, then it will be filled in. In the meantime we are working on the Khonsu Temple roof until the pit is filled in and the new floor blocks are installed.

We have also resumed our work at Medinet Habu, where the main conservation work this season will focus on transferring fragmentary material from the old blockyard to the new one, and recording all the material on Julia Schmied's master database. The USAID-funded dewatering project trenching to the south and east of the temple is well underway and on schedule. Tina Di Cerbo is happily constructing one new mastaba after another in the Luxor Temple blockyard with our workmen, making terrific progress. Julia headed to Edfu today to work with Nadine Moeller at Tell Edfu, and will be back here by week's end for a month and a half work with us; she and husband Krisztián Vértés are scheduled to return in early February.

November

Luxor continues to change almost daily, and because the modern landscape is directly on top of a series of ancient landscapes, the antiquities community has its work cut out for it these days. But these challenges are bringing people together. In a wonderful collaboration, the SCA, ARCE, and AERA (Mark Lehner's Ancient Egypt Research Associates) are collaborating on another salvage archaeological field school in Luxor that this time will focus on the remnants of the Luxor Tell behind the Andraus Pasha's houses near Luxor Temple. The one housing the National Democratic Party headquarters had already been demolished before we arrived, quite to everyone's

surprise. The Luxor Tell section is now rising above where the house used to be, its stratigraphy exposed like a layer cake. The surviving house, still inhabited by the descendants of Andraus Pasha, is slated for eventual demolition. The GOE wants the tell remnant, already partly excavated by Don Whitcomb and Jan Johnson in 1985–86, completely removed as part of the Corniche site-management program. Mark, the SCA, and the field school (directed by Mark and Mohsen el-Kamal), will spend two and a half months excavating it.

And there is other good news: 75 acres of illegal fields and irrigation systems encroaching into Amenhotep III's Malqata Palace and Deir el-Shelwit areas in western Thebes have been destroyed. Gurna Inspectorate director Mustafa Waziri took me on a review of the area and says that the deed was done with six bulldozers and two trucks full of police in June. Negotiations are also underway with the local landowners to purchase land abutting the antiquities areas for the construction of a protective wall around the Malkata Palace site and Roman temple at Deir el-Shelwit, based on plans drawn up by the Metropolitan Museum and Emory University team last year. Similar walls are going up around Giza and Abydos, with more to come as Egypt's population and land needs grow. Who would have ever thought that it would come to this? ...

January 2010

I can't believe that we are already well into the third week of January; the season is just shooting by. On January 9, 2010, Mark Lehner, Mohsen el-Kamal, and the SCA/ARCE archaeological field school started work on the Luxor Tell — they will be training thirty archaeology inspectors in salvage excavation and recording techniques. They have already made excellent progress, and have delineated the structures of the upper level, including the service area of the now demolished, nineteenth-century Pasha's house.

The sphinx-road work has lurched forward as well — the GOE has decreed that a major increment of the work must be finished by March. In order to speed things up, the Egyptian army is now working with the SCA conservators on the restoration work, and several road sections look like scenes out of the movie *The Ten Commandments* as the army engineers and stone workers shape new stone blocks to replace the destroyed sphinx bases and road sections. Many of the Nectanebo I sphinxes along the road are totally gone, so we are preparing to hand over to the SCA all the broken-up sphinxes we recovered from the area of the great eastern Roman gate and partially reassembled in our blockyard. The SCA will finish the reassembly and place them on new bases along the newly exposed and rebuilt sphinx road. The timing is actually perfect, since the three large and several small platforms in the blockyard used for sphinx restoration can now be used for our St. Thecla Church documentation and restoration work next season. I am pleased to report that we have received a grant from the Sawiris family to catalog, document, and restore parts of this lovely sixth-century basilica — the oldest known in Luxor — whose foundations were uncovered by the SCA in

1960; only the sanctuary survives, and LOTS of architectural bits scattered around the blockyards that we will survey, move, document, and analyze next year. We will see if some restoration to the original building is possible.

There have been three SCA-sponsored symposia this season. The first, on November 4th, commemorated work done after Howard Carter in the Valley of the Kings. Another occurred the next day in Cairo honoring over a hundred years of Hungarian archaeological work in Egypt, at which I spoke, highlighting the extraordinary art work of our Hungarian staff member Krisztián Vértés. From January 3rd to 5th I participated in a three-day colloquium on Temples of Millions of Years held here in Luxor. The colloquium was extremely interesting, and a lively shouting match between two senior Egyptologists and two archaeoastronomers over Egyptian temple orientation gave the last day some additional zest. I gave a paper highlighting our *Medinet Habu* publications, including our new volume *Medinet Habu* volume IX, and announced the Oriental Institute's new digital publication program as well (free PDF downloads of every Egypt title — including all of ours — via the Oriental Institute Publications Web page). It was very well received, and our colleagues were tremendously pleased by the generosity of the Oriental Institute and its friends, particularly Lewis and Misty Gruber, who funded the scanning. Our Christmas and New Year's celebrations were filled with cheer, and shared with a few Australian, Japanese, ARCE, and Egyptian friends and colleagues. On New Year's Eve, we danced under a full 'blue moon' and beautiful stars; we even experienced a partial eclipse. It was warm that night — and actually, it's been the warmest winter I have ever experienced here in Luxor, in the mid-80s F or higher every day, highly unusual for this time of year.

At Luxor Temple stone mason Frank Helmholz has just laid the last of the 111 fragments in the Amenhotep III sun court eastern wall. After I helped him tweak their position, he is mortaring everything in place and putting up the last of the sandstone backing slabs on the exterior of the wall. It looks really good, and should be done by the end of the month. It's gigantic! I'm itching to do the reconstruction painting on the plastered area in the spaces between the fragments. We are also in the final stages of our blockyard open-air museum installation. Conservator Hiroko Kariya and Tina are both working overtime to get everything ready for the opening at the end of March, and it's looking fantastic. We have assembled 4,000 years of inscribed fragment groups in chronological sequence all along the outside of the temple to the east and have even laid a paved sandstone walkway and steel guard rails to direct the hordes of tourists along the displays. We are very, very proud of this work, which will be lit for night viewing, with labels in English and Arabic. Architect Jay Heidel is also designing a series of educational panels for the main axis of the temple — long needed in Luxor Temple.

This fall we also literally broke new ground and collaborated with ARCE on an archeological cleaning and restoration project (with Pam Rose as archaeologist) of the third-century AD, Roman castrum wall of Diocletian where it abuts the

eastern Ramesses II pylon. Now that we have cleared it and defined at least its northern exterior edge, we are discussing stabilizing what's left of the brick wall, which still stands a couple of meters high but is badly decayed, and is very much like an apple core now. Epigrapher Christian Greco is also back with us, working on his translations of all the Roman inscriptions in the Luxor Temple complex, some of which we discovered in the blockyard and are completely unknown.

At Khonsu Temple Brett, Jen, and Keli continue to document the hundreds of reused blocks in the foundations and flooring of the temple prior to the ARCE floor restoration, and in the process are finding more pieces of the original, dismantled Eighteenth Dynasty Khonsu Temple and Nineteenth Dynasty additions — some of it from the time of Sety I. At Medinet Habu Lotfi Hassan and his crew are busy transferring material from the old blockyard to the new one we built and finished last season and in front of it are creating another open-air museum display area. Sue Osgood and Margaret De Jong are working away on drawings for the next volumes in our small Amun temple series, Margaret on the facade lintel, reinscribed by Ptolemy VIII, and Sue *inside* the lintel of the Akoris doorway, where she is tracing Thutmose pillar reliefs covered by the later doorway. You never know where this work is going to take you!

And as if that were not enough, we have even started the prep work for documenting and cleaning another late Amenhotep III-period private tomb, that of Nefershepso (TT 107) the steward of Amenhotep's Malkata Palace. With our MMA and Emory friends surveying, archaeologically investigating, and eventually restoring the palace itself (they resume next month and will be staying with us), it seemed an appropriate time to begin the condition study and preliminary documentation work of this tomb now. That, plus the fact we obtained the concession a LONG time ago, as a parallel to the Theban tomb of Kheruef (TT 192) that we published in 1980. Yarko Kobylecky and Ellie Smith will be photographing the inscribed facade within the next few weeks, and our plan is to draw the inscribed facade next season. We will plot strategy regarding the clearing of the broad hall — filled to the ceiling with debris — with Boyo Ockinga and Susanne Binder of Macquarie University who will be working with us on the project. No one has ever accessed farther than the broad hall, so, while it appears that the rest of the tomb is undecorated, there may be some interesting bits farther on.

As I mentioned, this season has been full of surprises. On January 18th, I was working late in my office when Sue Osgood called to tell me that her bathroom plumbing had exploded, and that I had to get up there *right away* to see the damage. This was not the first time this had happened — the plumbing in our historic residence is sometimes a bit of a challenge. I didn't find exploded plumbing, but I did find the entire Chicago House staff assembled in Sue's balloon-filled sitting room, shouting "SURPRISE!" and scaring me half to death. It was a surprise *Heb Sed*/thirty-year jubilee to commemorate my thirty-plus years working in Egypt and at Chicago House! They presented me with a photo album (with many

embarrassing photos), and in a short speech Brett informed us that I had been a member of the Epigraphic Survey longer than anyone in its history (I think that the term "living legend" was used, which made everyone laugh). Unbeknownst to me, the team had been preparing this event — and the photo album — for weeks. I was completely surprised, and very touched. We have a pretty extraordinary team out here. And sneaky, too.

February–March

We are all well as we head into the last weeks of the field season. This week the GOE started trenching along the outside of the Chicago House front wall to lay new electrical and water conduits for the new Corniche. They have closed off the road to the north and south of us, all the way to the hospital, and the Egyptian army is doing all the construction, so it's quite a production — I don't think that I have ever seen so many trucks and front loaders. Trenching just outside our front wall for a reinforced concrete service tunnel has already begun — I'm glad that we built our new front wall high!

The March 29th opening date for the Luxor Temple blockyard open-air museum is fast approaching, and we are furiously preparing for that now. Signs made by Hiroko are still going up, and the last of the stone paving slabs arrived today. I finished the restoration painting of the missing bits on the plaster between the stone fragments of all the groups in the main display area today, and have resumed working on the Amenhotep III wall — also recently finished — which is actually great fun. I am giving a lecture at the SCA Mummification Museum lecture series on our work this season and will announce the opening then to our friends, colleagues, and guides.

And, after MONTHS of incredible heat, the temps here dropped over 30 degrees last week, from 100+ degrees F, even at night, to 70–80 degrees during the day and the 50s–60s at night. Very sweet! We were frying out there. Our poor Malkata friends, Diana Craig Patch, Catharine Roehrig, Peter Lacovara, and Ginger Emery, staying with us during the whole month of February, experienced some of the worst of it, but made great inroads in their program. They worked in two areas of the palace, the workmen's village near the audience pavilion, and the temple of Amun, where they have started to make sense of the different building phases. Partly due to their activity at the palace, and their surveying and mapping of the whole area last year, the SCA is really building a protective 11 km wall around the entire site. I have seen the wall with my own eyes, and it is a wonder. Quite frankly, it is the only way the site will be protected. This is the way of it now, all over Egypt.

On a very happy note, on February 12th, Krisztián Vértés returned to Luxor after months of chemo and radiation therapy for a rare cancer that is now in check, *al'humdililah*. Welcome back, Krisztián! Colleague Margie Fisher worked with us in February and March, and in late February she and I picked up Jay in Middle Egypt where he had just finished a surveying gig at Sheikh Abada. On our way to Cairo we stopped at Amarna, where I was surprised to see literally kilometers of green fields in the southern half of the site. I had not seen Amarna since

1992, and the change is profound. Even more startling was the trip north to Cairo, along the western desert road. We could see the pyramid field the entire way, from Meidum north, far to the east of us. The area between us and the pyramids for hundreds of kilometers (even the desert to the west of us as far as the eye could see), all desert only a short while ago, is now cultivated fields and orchards. The pyramids are now on a long island of desert, completely surrounded by cultivation and new suburbs! I found myself torn between admiration at the resourcefulness of the Egyptian people — who can turn the desert into lush cultivation so quickly now — and shock at this fast-growing threat to Egypt's fragile antiquities.

So, that is the challenge facing the archaeological community in Egypt. But lots of good things are happening too. The ARCE/SCA archaeological field school under the direction of Mark and Mohsen successfully excavated and recorded one of the last bits of the Luxor Tell behind the torn-down Pasha's house/National Democratic Party headquarters. We held library orientations for the team and gave several seminars for the students on epigraphic recording techniques (one in the library, one at Khonsu Temple, and one at Medinet Habu), and I attended the graduation ceremony on March 11th to help our friends celebrate. They had everything to be proud of; their accomplishment is history itself, and well done.

On Monday, March 29th we opened the Luxor Temple blockyard open-air museum to the general public, a project three years in the making. The results are quite wonderful, I am very pleased to report, and well worth our efforts. Viewers are led along a protected, lit area that hugs the eastern side of the Amenhotep III temple and court. There we have mounted and reassembled more than more than sixty sets of block fragments and joined groups chronologically that range from the Middle Kingdom through to the present day, representing 4,000 years of building activity. At the north end are display platforms showing conservation issues, and a long platform dedicated to material that was recovered during the USAID-supported dewatering trenching around Luxor Temple, the archaeological monitoring for which was coordinated by an ARCE/SCA collaboration. The joined fragment groups represent thirty years of my personal work on the site, so I am particularly pleased to have them accessible to everyone now. One of the coolest things about the museum is the fact that we have an almost unbroken sequence of relief carving from the later dynasties, from the Twenty-ninth Dynasty through the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Viewing these groups, one after the other, one can see how the official carving styles changed and evolved over time. Much of the material will eventually go back to the various monuments from which it was quarried, so we view the museum as an organic, ever-changing facility, and there is much more to share as the years go by. We have intentionally made the labels quite spare, but this summer we will put together an online catalog linked to the Epigraphic Survey Web site, with lots of information for those who desire it. Sincerest congratulations must go to Hiroko, Tina, and our

intrepid workmen, who outdid themselves in the realization of this long-held dream.

The culmination of the museum is to be found inside the Amenhotep III sun court around the northeastern corner, into which the public is led from the museum. We finished the restoration and reconstruction on the original wall of 111 fragments that I had partially published in the Cleveland Museum symposium proceedings *Amenhotep III: Art Historical Analysis* back in 1990, a gigantic bark of Amun scene, depicted resting in state in the middle of the court. The scene is preserved almost all the way up to the cabin/shrine top, with Amenhotep III presenting a huge pile of food offerings to the bark that has paused in the court on its way into the main sanctuary for the Opet Festival rituals. The wall was carved during Amenhotep III's reign, was hacked by Akhenaten, restored by Tutankhamun, appropriated by Horemheb, and enlarged by Sety I, who inscribed a restoration inscription. So, it is very sweet finally getting it re-erected where it belongs. Frank and our workmen positioned the fragments around a brick core, as Chicago House did with the restored Khonsu barge group in the Colonnade Hall that was finished in 2006. Because the 111 block fragments represent only half of the decorated wall surface, I am painting the missing bits of decoration with acrylic paint (burnt umber) in simple outline, as we did in the Colonnade Hall; I still have a bit more to do. I did the same thing with the joined chronological groups in the open-air museum to good effect. The two areas have taken a long time to paint, but it makes everything more comprehensible for the uninitiated viewer (and certainly kept ME out of mischief the latter part of our season). This work, and the funding for the blockyard open-air museum is all thanks to the World Monuments Fund (Robert W. Wilson Challenge to Conserve Our Heritage grant). Bless you!

April

We completed our 2009–2010 season yesterday, April 15th, and I am tying up loose ends here at the house today and tomorrow before heading for Cairo tomorrow night. I still have to pack up my office, back up my files, sign checks, plot financial strategy with finance manager Safi Ouri, and make sure that administrator Samir el-Guindy has everything he needs from me. I finished and turned in my preliminary reports for our four field projects yesterday (Luxor Temple, Medinet Habu, Nefersekeru tomb, and Khonsu Temple) to our SCA friends. It's been a wildly productive season and everyone is happy, *al'humdihilah*.

All the staff have now left for home; Tina is still here closing up the house and will finish the last week of the month (thank you, Tina!). It's HOT again; 106 degrees F yesterday. Most staff got away in time, but at least six (Yarko, Brett, Hiroko, Marie, Keli, and Jen) are stuck in Cairo due to the volcanic eruption in Iceland. All European airports are now closed, which is surreal. We are all praying that the wind picks up and blows the ash away soon. It is always an adventure out

here, but no one expected a volcano in Iceland to affect us here in Egypt!

Once again, let me extend my heartfelt thanks to the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities and to Chairman Dr. Zahi Hawass for another productive collaboration this season. Sincerest thanks as well to those of you who faithfully and generously support our preservation work in Luxor; bless you all. If you find yourselves in Luxor and would like to stop by and see our work and facility, please contact us in advance to determine the best time for a meeting. Chicago House is open from October 15th until April 15th each year, and is closed Saturday afternoons and Sundays. To arrange a visit during the season, please contact the Oriental Institute Membership Office at (773) 834-9777, or contact me, Epigraphic Survey Director Ray Johnson, directly at: wr-johnson@uchicago.edu.

ADDRESSES OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY

| October through March: | April through September: |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Chicago House | The Oriental Institute |
| Luxor | 1155 East 58th Street |
| Arab Republic of Egypt | Chicago, IL 60637 |
| TEL: (011) (20) (95) 237-2525 | TEL: (773) 702-9524 |
| FAX: (011) (20) (95) 238-1620 | FAX: (773) 702-9853 |

All photographs, except where otherwise noted, are digital images taken by Ray Johnson.



Chicago House professional staff 2009–2010. Top row, left to right: Brett McClain, Jen Kimpton, Keli Alberts, Christian Greco; Second row from top: Mohamed Abou el-Makarem, Girgis Samwell, Samir el-Guindy, Saft Ouri, Frank Helmholz; Third row from top: Dina Hassan and Niño, Nahed Samir and Joia, Nan Ray, Marie Bryan, Anait Helmholz; Balustrade left: Lotfi Hassan and Kiko; Balustrade right: Yarko Kobylecky; Bottom row: Hiroko Kariya, Sue Osgood, Jay Heidel, Ray Johnson, Ellie Smith, and Sue Lezon. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky and Sue Lezon



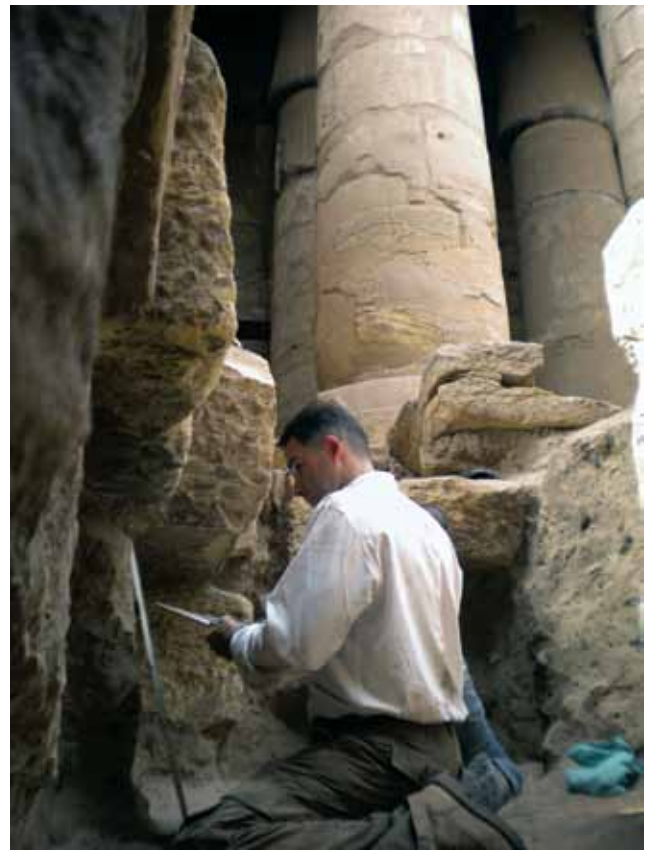
New entryway to Luxor Temple



Inspector Ghada drawing a loose block at Khonsu Temple



Keli tracing Khonsu Temple floor block



Brett collating Khonsu Temple court foundation block



Khonsu Temple court reused Sety I block



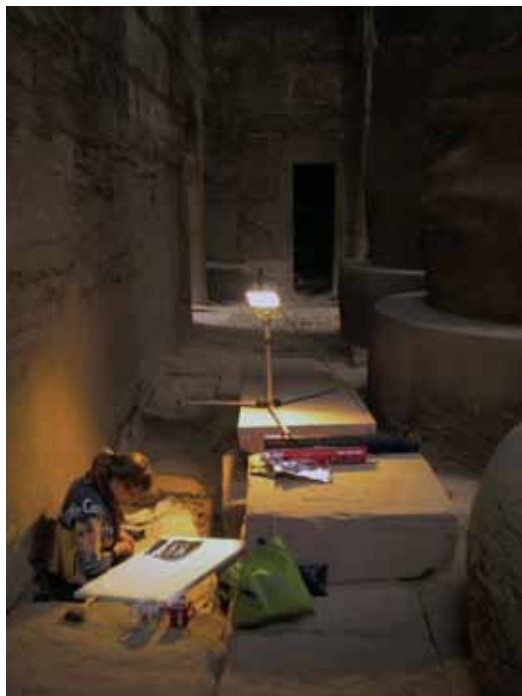
Brett, Jen, and Keli collating in the Khonsu Temple court



Khonsu Temple block drawing by Krisztián



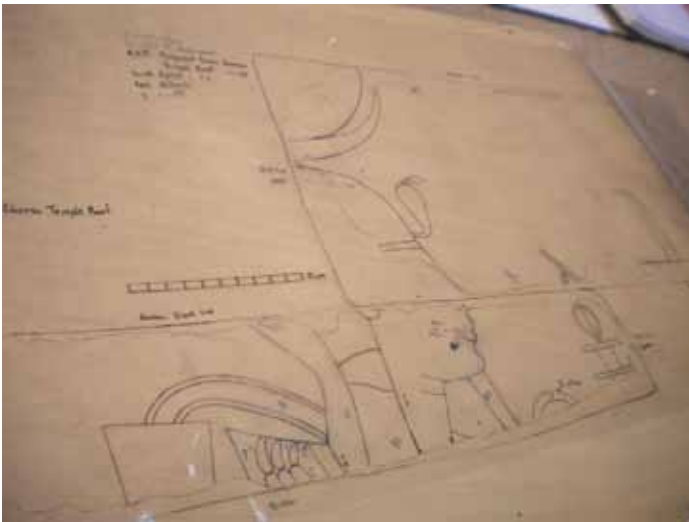
Keli's foil vulture rubbing



Keli drawing the vulture floor block in the Khonsu Temple court ambulatory



Khonsu Temple court ambulatory new floor blocks in place after documentation



Khonsu Temple roof fragment tracings by Keli



Khonsu inscribed by Ramesses IV



Khonsu Temple roof work



Medinet Habu blockyard moving



Julia photographing in the Medinet Habu blockyard



Medinet Habu blockyard conservation area



Medinet Habu prisoner heads block



Medinet Habu blockyard Ramesses III lintel reassembly



Medinet Habu blockyard block moving by Frank and crew



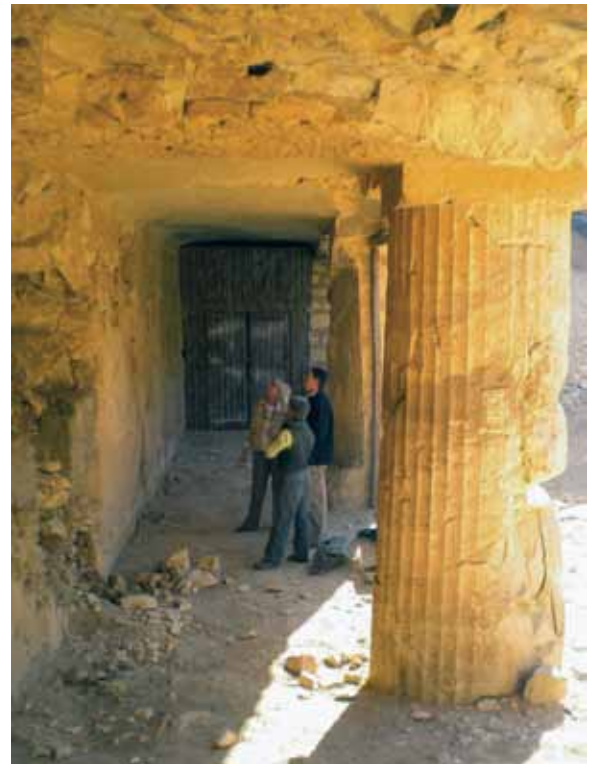
Sue drawing reliefs hidden by the lintel at Medinet Habu



Sue Osgood inside the Akoris lintel at the top of the scaffolding at Medinet Habu



Margaret demonstrating drawing techniques during the field school epigraphy seminar at Medinet Habu



Nefersekheru epigraphic team



Nefersekheru decorated facade being photographed by Yarko



Nefersekheru unexcavated broad hall interior being examined by Boyo Ockinga



Nefersekheru tomb from above



Nefersekheru's title: Steward of the palace 'Nebmaatre is the Dazzling Aten'



Roman wall excavation documentation at Luxor Temple



Roman wall excavations at Luxor Temple, December 2009



Jay and Pieter Collet surveying the Roman wall at Luxor Temple



Luxor Temple Roman wall archeological team Pam, Jay, and Andrew Bednarski



Sami and Saber installing lamps in the blockyard open-air museum



Luxor Temple blockyard open-air museum path construction



Display mastaba finishing



Display mastaba construction



Hiroko infilling the Nectanebo II group



Nectanebo II fragment group construction



Coptic dove from a lintel in the open-air museum



Nectanebo II group finished for display



Alaa plastering the infilled surface of the Nectanebo group



Egyptian creatures display



Open-air museum crew



Open-air museum central area



Open-air museum south



Open-air museum opening March 29, 2010. photo by Yarko



Ptolemy XII cat detail

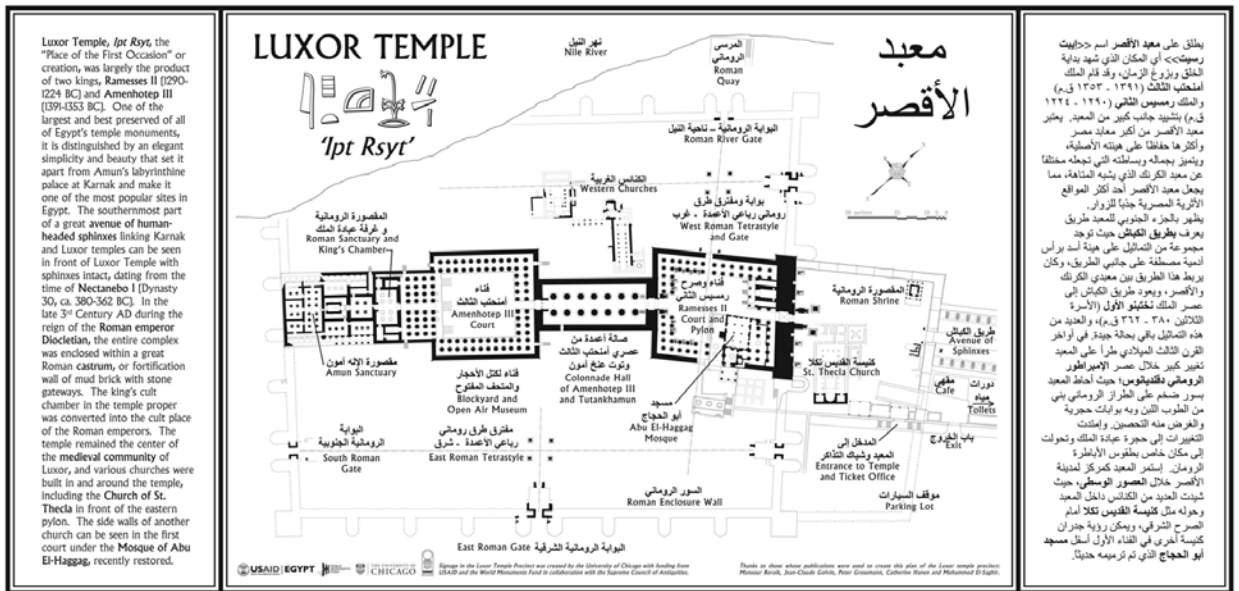


Dewatering display and Colonnade Hall



Colonnade Hall Amun and Mut Dyad cleaning by Siska and Hiroko

Luxor Temple orientation panel designed by Jay Heidel



Amenhotep III wall construction



Sety I group



Amenhotep III outer wall slab construction



Amenhotep III outer wall slabs being mortared into place



Amenhotep III outer wall finished



Amenhotep III wall being plastered and infilled by Salah



Amenhotep III interior, inscribed wall being positioned by Frank, January 2010

The finished, restored Amenhotep III wall



Ray painting missing details on the plaster between the blocks on the Amenhotep III wall. Photo by Jay Heidel





SCA conservator Saleh restoring a Nectanebo I sphinx before moving



Sphinx-moving in February



Thecla Church blocks



Sphinx being restored on sphinx road



Service tunnel trench outside Chicago House, March 24, 2010



Corniche service tunnel and riverbank construction, June 2010