



# CHICAGO HOUSE BULLETIN



Volume XXII

*Privately Circulated*

October 2011



*Dismantling of the Domitian Gate.  
Ali, Mustafa, Tayyib, Frank, and  
Saber, March 3, 2011*



## THE 2010–2011 FIELD SEASON



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*The Oriental Institute*

THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, IL 60637

Telephone: (773) 702-9514; Facsimile: (773) 702-9853; E-mail: oi-administration@uchicago.edu

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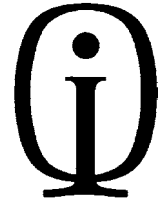


Chicago House professional staff 2010–2011. Back row, left to right: Artist Keli Alberts; Egyptologist/epigrapher Christian Greco; Egyptologist/epigrapher Jen Kimpton; Egyptologist/senior epigrapher Brett McClain. Second to the top row, left to right: Egyptologist/epigrapher Tina Di Cerbo; Luxor Temple conservator Hiroko Kariya; senior artist Margaret De Jong; engineer Girgis Samwell; librarian Marie Bryan; stonemason Frank Helmholz; assistant administrator Samwell Maher. Second from bottom row, left to right: conservator Mohamed Abou el Makarem; Egyptologist/artist Krisztián Vértés; Egyptologist/epigrapher Julia Schmieid; Egyptologist/director Ray Johnson; architect Jay Heidel; assistant librarian Anait Helmholz; administrator Samir el Guindy. Bottom row, left to right: senior accountant Essam el Sayed; conservator Nahed Samir Andraus and daughter Joia; Medinet Habu senior conservator Lotfi Khaled Hassan and son Hany; conservator Dina Hassan and son Karim; photo archivist/photographer Sue Lezon; Pia Kobylecky; and staff photographer Yarko Kobylecky. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky and Sue Lezon





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of The Oriental Institute, The University of Chicago

Volume XXII

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## THE CHICAGO HOUSE FIELD SEASON OCTOBER 2010 TO APRIL 2011: A SEASON DIARY

*By W. Raymond Johnson, Field Director*

The Epigraphic Survey's 2010–2011 archaeological field season started like any other, and the first half of our season was one of the busiest we have ever experienced. Tourism was at high-season levels even in the fall, and we had an endless stream of visitors, interested groups, and colleagues stop by almost as soon as we opened the Chicago House doors in October. Our field activities resumed at Luxor Temple, Karnak, and Medinet Habu, and they expanded to include documentation at Theban Tomb (TT) 107, the tomb of Nefersekheru. At the same time, the government of Egypt (GOE) development programs in Luxor lurched into high gear, and in the first three months of our season (October, November, December, and the first part of January) Luxor saw dramatic changes to its urban landscape, particularly around the Chicago House facility, as building after building came down.

And then, on January 25th, the day Egypt was to celebrate the newly designated Police Day, everything changed.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let's go back to the beginning of our season, when we resumed our archaeological activities in Luxor and began our 2010–2011 season, little knowing what a historic winter it would be.

### OCTOBER–NOVEMBER

Chicago House reopened on October 15th, thanks once again to Tina Di Cerbo and our intrepid workmen who started the opening and cleaning process in September. After I signed the contract for the season with the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) in Cairo and passed on the paperwork to SCA Luxor director Mansour Boraik, the following week saw a resumption of all of our archaeological field activities. It was a decidedly busy autumn, and *hot*, but terrific to be back. Among our first visitors in October were Metropolitan Museum of Art director Thomas Campbell, MMA Egyptian department director Dorothea Arnold, Dieter Arnold, and Adela Oppenheim,



*Left: Medinet Habu sacred lake, October 19, 2010. Right: Medinet Habu sacred lake, March 2011, the result of the USAID dewatering program for western Thebes, back to 1930 levels*

## THE 2010–2011 FIELD SEASON OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



*Andrea Dudek (left) and Joan Fortune (above) at work in the Chicago House library, November 2010*

who working in the north at Dashur came up to Luxor for some sightseeing. Later in the month, University of Chicago faculty member Nadine Moeller, husband Greg Marouard, Hratch Papazian, and the Tell Edfu team joined us for our annual Halloween party, the traditional opening get-together of the season for the archaeological community in Luxor.

During the first week of November, the new mission director of USAID Egypt, Jim Bever, and a few USAID

colleagues came to Luxor on an antiquities briefing tour. John Shearman, associate director of ARCE Luxor, and I showed them our respective work sites and discussed USAID-supported preservation issues. We started the day on the west bank at Medinet Habu, after which we visited the pumping station for the new dewatering project that was activated there in September. (As of November the west bank groundwater at Medinet Habu was already down a meter, so the system is definitely working.) The day ended with a walk through Luxor Temple and a briefing on Chicago House and American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) projects — including Chicago House's new blockyard open-air museum. A few days later, we had a visit from and reception for the Chicago Field Museum of Natural History, led by old friend Jim Phillips and accompanied by Oriental Institute Visiting Committee members and friends Lewis and Misty Gruber.

That same week, Oriental Institute Visiting Committee members Andrea Dudek and Joan Fortune arrived to work as Chicago House library "slaves" under the supervision of librarian Marie Bryan for a couple of weeks, through Thanksgiving. They helped with shelf-reading, assisted library patrons, and helped Marie with the conversion of our older books to the Library of Congress system, all much appreciated. On November 21st they joined us



*Nadine Moeller explaining the stratigraphy at Tell Edfu, November 21, 2010.*



## THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

on a trip south to see Nadine Moeller and her crew at Tell Edfu, thanks to the kindness of the SCA. Nadine's excavations are beautiful, and they have another major granary, many more seal impressions, figurines, tons of pottery (literally), and perhaps another late Middle Kingdom columned hall attached to the original one, all a joy to see. On November 22nd Carlotta Maher joined our ranks for a couple of weeks of development work, and added great luster to our Thanksgiving holiday.

During that time the GOE-sponsored Luxor City development project went into an intense new phase. A half-dozen 1920s art-deco apartment complexes along Karnak Street behind Chicago House were demolished in the road-widening program there, and two more 100-year-old villas came down, the last of their kind in our area. Of the two nearby churches, we are informed that one — a beautiful, century-old Coptic church, Santa Maria — will survive, but the other, smaller Protestant Evangelical church (that our administrator Samir el-Guindy attends) will

be demolished later this season, since its back end hangs over the Sphinx Avenue; a new replacement church is going to be built by the GOE nearby.

We're photographing all this as quickly as we can (photographer Yarko Kobylecky is definitely being put through his paces), but old Luxor is coming down faster than we can document it. There is new construction as well, including a number of large government offices, many south of Luxor proper. The new three-story government telephone office recently built behind our garage is being finished with Egyptian-style cornices and columns, and is quite a sight.



Carlotta at Karnak, November 2010



Apartment demolition, Karnak Street, late October 2010



New church parking lot, after apartment demolition, December 2010



Villa Nefertari, October 2010



Villa Nefertari, November 2010

## THE 2010–2011 FIELD SEASON OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



*American School president's house, December 2010*



*Education Institute, January 2011*

The kilometer-long Corniche riverside “shopping arcade” in front of and below Chicago House is also quickly taking shape; the GOE is trying to decide what style in which to finish it out, and has constructed templates of four style types down the row: “Hatshepsut mortuary temple” style, “Mediterranean colonial,” “Nubian village,” and something that looks like a combination of all three!

In the midst of all the demolition, Egypt’s First Lady Susanne Mubarak paid a visit to Luxor in early November, which meant that there was a flurry of activity to clean everything up. Construction sites were concealed behind royal-blue silk curtains, while the rubble of the demolished apartment houses disappeared and was replaced overnight with parking lots and large gardens that look they have been there forever! It was very disorienting to have the landscape change so dramatically almost daily. Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif came to town over the Bairam holiday in the middle of the month, so there was an even more intensive burst of activity as the GOE workers toiled day and night toward the completion of both the telephone office and parts of the riverfront area before his arrival, for his review. Wild.

Despite all this activity around us, things have gone very well work-wise. We have started working on dozens of decorated Thecla Church blocks scattered throughout the Luxor Temple blockyards that will be moved to a special holding and processing area immediately east of the Colonnade Hall. The sixth-century AD church dedicated to St. Thecla stood originally in front of Luxor Temple, and its surviving sanctuary foundations — made of reused pharaonic blocks — can be seen just beyond the present entryway to the Luxor Temple precinct. The sanctuary foundations were the focus of a Chicago House conservation condition study a few seasons ago, and many of the decorated blocks in the blockyard appear to come from that area of the church. Conservator Hiroko Kariya has started cleaning any blocks that require it, and architect Jay Heidel has started tracing the decorated surfaces of each block. He will eventually use AutoCAD to create drawings of the joined architectural fragments. Hiroko is also doing follow-up work in the new Luxor Temple blockyard open-air museum, which weathered very well over the summer, but requires condition monitoring, cleaning, a bit more landscaping, and repair where necessary. We’re



*New pedestrian Corniche under construction, November 2010*



*Hatshepsut mortuary temple-style template, Corniche below Chicago House, with Carlotta and Jay*



## THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

even preparing to add a new block to a group of Thutmose III fragments in the display area.

The Khonsu Temple documentation work coordinated by Brett McClain (with Jen Kimpton, Krisztián Vértés, Keli Alberts, and me) is also in high gear, and we are recording some astonishing material in the first court. This includes two large Sety I door lintels, lavishly decorated, that have been carefully drawn by Krisztián and Keli. The ARCE and SCA workmen have been very sensitive and efficient in the cleaning of the floor blocks, so much so that they have revealed twice as many reused block surfaces than we originally observed in the court, every one of them diagnostic and preserving enormous amounts of information. We have worked hard to keep up with ARCE's floor restoration schedule and have been quite successful in finishing the documentation on time, well before the new floor slabs are laid which effectively seal off the earlier decoration for the foreseeable future. This month we have been working our way northward along the west side of the court. We have discussed with John Shearman where

he needs us to be next, so we will be planning the rest of the documentation accordingly.

## DECEMBER

The beginning of December saw temperatures starting to fall to more comfortable levels, finally. It was even cool at night, a great relief. Our hope was that it would not be the long, hot winter like last winter! (It was not, thank God.)

"Luxor Day" began with a bang on December 9th with a 1 AM concert at Luxor Temple that woke us all up, and we are more than two kilometers away! People's ears must have been bleeding at the concert site, but they say that the music was great. The international human trafficking conference sponsored by Mme. Mubarak in Luxor started on the 10th, with U.S. State Department visitors attending, and even celebrities. We painted our back (now main) gate in anticipation of drop-ins, and I was very happy that Carlotta was present to help brief any visitors (we did have some, but no celebrities). In anticipation of the gala



*Luxor Temple blockyard open-air museum at night  
(photo by Yarko Kobylecky)*



*Sayid, Saoud, and  
Mohamed moving  
Thecla Church blocks*



*Hiroko cleaning Thecla Church blocks*



*Luxor Temple Thecla Church block*



THE 2010-2011 FIELD SEASON OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



Luxor Temple blockyard, January 2011. Clockwise from upper left: Jay photographing Luxor Temple Thecla Church blocks; Jay tracing a Thecla block; Nan and Mohamed; Jay's first Thecla Church block join



Left: Thutmose III augmented group framed out, March 2011. Right: Thutmose III group finished



Jen and Krisztián working on the Khonsu block database, December 2010



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Left: Brett and ARCE's John Shearman planning the work at Khonsu Temple. Right: Ray checking the Middle Kingdom limestone block, Khonsu Temple, March 2011 (photo by Krisztián Vértés)



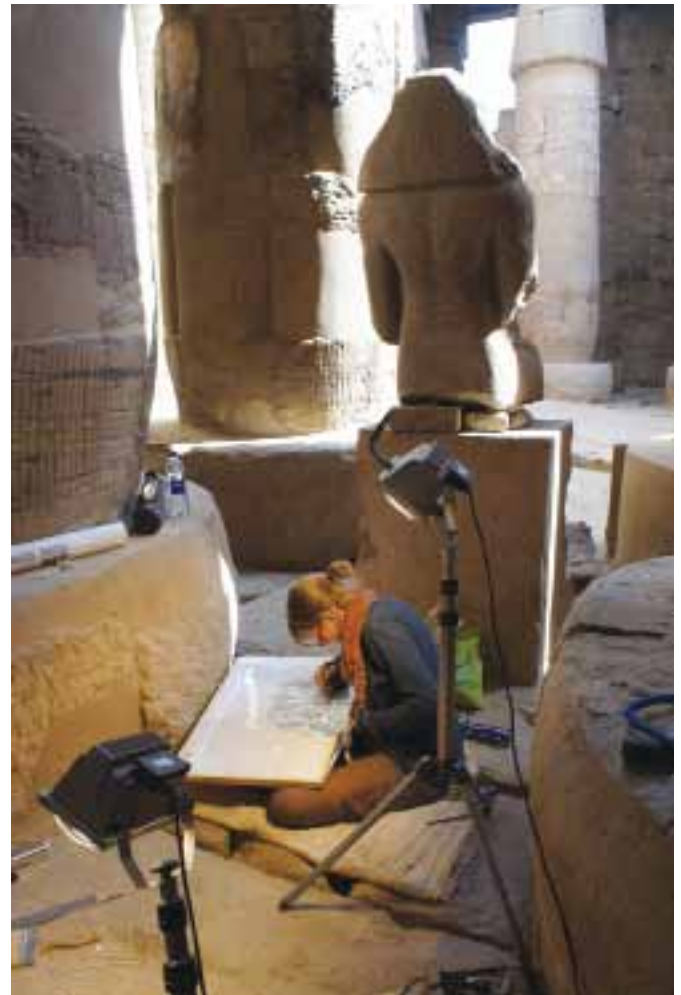
Jen collating Middle Kingdom limestone block, Khonsu Temple (photo by Sue Lezon)



SCA inspector Fawzie and Krisztián working on the Sety I lintel, Khonsu Temple



Sety I lintel detail. Khonsu court



Keli drawing in the Khonsu court, December 2010

THE 2010-2011 FIELD SEASON OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



The new Telephone Central Office, from the front (top), and from the Chicago House back garden (bottom)

weekend the Telephone Central Office behind Chicago House was completely finished out in a neo-neo-Egyptian style. It's like having an Aten temple with multiple pylons and papyrus-bundle columns rising over our garage! I will admit that it is growing on me.

Senior artists Margaret De Jong and Susan Osgood have been working hard in the Medinet Habu small Amun temple this month, concentrating on drawing enlargements for our next volume, *Medinet Habu Volume X*, which will contain the documentation of the Eighteenth Dynasty temple facade; the pillars of the Thutmocide ambulatory (including the interior and lateral pillar faces, but excluding the exterior Ramesses III decoration); and the interior



Medinet Habu blockyard. Counter-clockwise from upper right: Lotfi treating a Ramesses III door lintel, Medinet Habu blockyard, March 2011; Mohamed infilling restored false door, February 2011; Nahed helping to consolidate the Ramesses III lintel





architraves of the Thutmoside ambulatory. When time permits, they are also working on facsimile drawings for the following volume, *Medinet Habu* Volume XI, planned to consist of the exterior scenes and texts added to the temple under Ramesses III; the marginal inscriptions of Pinedjem; and the columns, gateway, and blocking stones of Achoris. Medinet Habu senior conservator Lotfi Hassan and his team, including conservators Nahed Samir Andraus and Mohamed Abou el Makarem, are making tremendous progress moving the thousands of inscribed architectural fragments from the old blockyard to the new one. Our goal is to have everything moved to the new, secure facility before the end of the season. Julia Schmied is diligently photographing and measuring each piece and entering all the information into a specially designed database of Medinet Habu fragments. Selected blocks have been photographed by Yarko with the large-format field camera. Lotfi has selected some of the best pieces for an open-air museum display along the front of the new blockyard and has also started to create footings for that material.

On December 16th I found myself in Cairo helping the SCA honor former Chicago House director Kent Weeks with a special festschrift volume, published by the SCA for the occasion. The volume was presented to him by SCA chairman Zahi Hawass, and a number of us spoke; my part was to give a rundown of his career in Egyptology. After the presentation, Zahi and Omar Sharif took Kent out to a celebratory dinner, richly deserved. *Mabruk, Kent!*

Sue Lezon continued her photo archives work with us over the holidays, guiding us in the upgrading of the computer equipment there and optimizing images for the database. Among our Christmas holiday guests this year it was a particular pleasure to welcome Egyptian Museum director Wafaa el-Seddik (who retired from that position at the end of December), husband Asme, and sons Tarek and Hady at Chicago House. It seems like yesterday that Wafaa was a young SCA inspector working in south Karnak, when we were both graduate students. The family added great joy to our holiday.



*New blockyard interior (photo by Lotfi Hassan)*

## JANUARY

After a festive New Year's Eve party to properly ring in the new year 2011, our New Year's Day was made quite memorable by the late-afternoon, short-notice visit of Prince Albert of Monaco, his then fiancée Charlene Wittstock (now wife), and some of their friends. When the group arrived, we walked them through the back and front gardens to a reception in the residence courtyard where they could meet the Chicago House staff. Shortly afterward we took them on a tour of the public rooms of the residence, followed by a visit to the library. There Lotfi, Brett, and Jen manned display stations of our work and talked to the group about our projects, while I gave them a basic briefing on our different recording techniques. The prince and his friends came and went all too quickly, but none of



*Medinet Habu new blockyard wall raising, March 2011*

THE 2010-2011 FIELD SEASON OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



West of Khokha at TT 107; Above: TT 107; below left: Badaway, Frank, and Ali reinforcing TT 107, January 13, 2011; Below: Kent, Brett, and SCA inspector Said discussing TT 107



us will ever forget that visit! The next day U.S. Ambassador Margaret Scobey came with some old college friends for tea and a look at the library. She was as always, great fun, and we all had a good talk about preservation issues and our collective efforts in Luxor.

On January 5th, Oriental Institute Visiting Committee member Nan Ray arrived to assist in the Luxor Temple blockyard and enter data in the blockyard databases. A few days earlier, on January 3rd, we resumed work on TT 107, the tomb of Amenhotep III's Malkata palace steward Nefersekeru. Our inspector for the tomb site turned out to be our friend Said Mamdouh, who regularly uses our library and is quite knowledgeable about the Theban necropolis. Some structural stabilization work





TT 107. Above: portico supported by screw jacks; top to bottom right: Sue drawing in TT 107; Margaret and SCA inspector Zenib at work, March 2011 (photo by Marie Bryan); and relief portrait of Neferssekheru



in the portico was necessary as a precaution, per the orders of our structural engineer Conor Power, who studied the monument last spring. Kent Weeks, newly arrived in town for his Valley of the Kings work, very kindly loaned us some equipment from KV 5, including pillar jacks to reinforce the limestone ceiling of the portico. From January 11th stone mason Frank Helmholz, Reis Badawy, and our workmen installed the jacks and long, wooden beams, and the stabilization was finished by the 15th. On the 17th Sue Osgood began penciling the first of the photographic drawing enlargements prepared by Yarko. We are starting slowly but in future seasons will do some cleaning there as well, since the tomb has never been cleared.

Richard Jasnow joined Tina for the first part of January to continue documenting and analyzing the enormous amounts of pharaonic and post-pharaonic graffiti inscribed throughout the Medinet Habu precinct, particularly on the well-preserved rooftops of the small Amun temple and the larger Ramesses III mortuary temple. Their publication of this material will augment the work of William Edgerton, who documented and published a volume of the best-preserved graffiti back in 1937 (*Medinet Habu Graffiti: Facsimilies*. Oriental Institute Publications 36).

This season marks the beginning of a new chapter of our Medinet Habu restoration work. Last year we realized that the first-century AD sandstone gate of the Roman emperor Domitian behind the small Amun temple, reassembled by George Daressy from scattered blocks in the late nineteenth century, was in danger of collapse due to increased decay of its foundations by groundwater salt. The lowest blocks of its northeastern corner were actually turning to sand. After consultation with the SCA, structural engineer Conor, Lotfi, and Frank, it was decided that the gate had to be completely dismantled in order to properly replace the foundations and sections of the lower courses with new sandstone, specially damp-coursed against any future groundwater problems. Permission was granted by the SCA to begin that work this season. This month Frank and our workmen



## THE 2010–2011 FIELD SEASON OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



*Richard and Tina working on digital graffiti drawings, January 2011*

erected scaffolding around the Egyptian-styled, Roman monument, and it was thoroughly photographed by Yarko assisted by Ellie Smith. Afterward the gate was carefully surveyed and architectural drawings were generated by Frank. These photographs and drawings will now form a permanent reference of the state of the monument at this moment in time, and will also serve as a guide for reconstruction later. Only after the preliminary, basic documentation is finished can dismantling begin.

This month also marked a milestone for the University of Chicago in Egypt with the inauguration of its undergraduate Middle Eastern Civilizations program in Cairo, with faculty direction from the chair of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC). An inaugural celebration took place in Cairo on January 23rd, which I had the pleasure of attending along with this year's sixteen students, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Chairman Theo van den Hout, Economics Chairman Harald Uhlig, Professor Cornell Fleischer, dignitaries from the University of Chicago (including dean of the College John W. Boyer and Associate Dean Martha Merrit) and Cairo University (including President Hossam Kamel), and even a number of Egyptian ministers. It was a great pleasure to meet Nassef Sawiris, who has very kindly supported the new Civilizations Program in Cairo, as well as Chicago House's Thecla Church project at Luxor Temple. Little did we all know that two days later the world was going to completely change for Egypt, and that shortly thereafter some of those ministers and dignitaries were going to be out of a job.



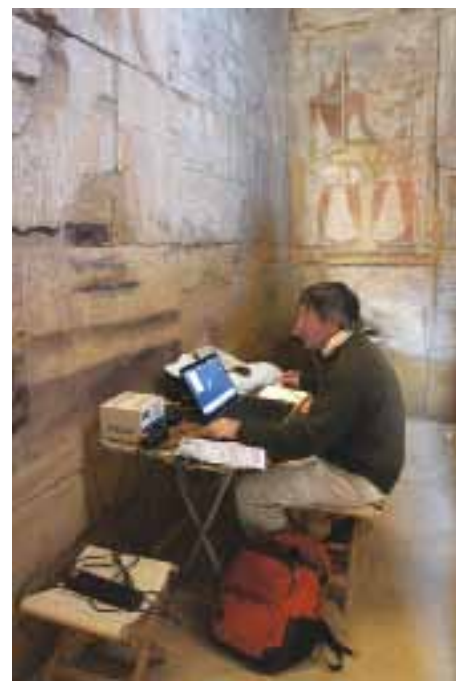
*Domitian gate large-format photography: Frank, Ellie, Ali, and Yarko*



On January 25th Egypt celebrated a new holiday, Police Day. The GOE held its official celebration of the event two days earlier, with little fanfare, hoping to nip any non-celebratory demonstrations. Instead, inspired by the revolution in Tunisia, the demonstrations in Tahrir Square peacefully protesting police brutality and abuses in the government occurred anyway, and are now history. You all know the story. The protestors demanded that Mubarak and his cabinet step down, an end to emergency law, freedom of speech, and a fair say about who ruled them. The demonstrations became so enormous, on January 27th the GOE, quite alarmed, turned off the Internet in the entire country and mobile phone use in downtown Cairo. The crowds only grew larger. On Friday, January



*Medinet Habu Domitian gate decay, January 2011*



*Frank drawing the Domitian gate*

29th, Mubarak announced that he would dissolve his cabinet and form a new government. That same night the Egyptian Museum was broken into and, sadly, some priceless objects smashed and stolen. On the 31st the new Egyptian cabinet was sworn in. And for the first time in the history of Egyptian antiquities, Egypt saw the formation of a Ministry of State for Antiquities Affairs, with Zahi Hawass appointed as its first minister.

We followed all of this from Luxor, where things stayed fairly quiet, and kept on with our work while staying in communication with SCA Luxor Director Mansour Boraik. On Friday afternoon, January 28th, there were local demonstrations against the police and the local governor of Luxor, Dr. Samir Farag. The Luxor Heritage Center to the east of Chicago House on Karnak Street, generally referred to as the Mubarak Library, and a police office building across the way had their windows broken by angry demonstrators. We could smell the tear gas that the police used against them from the roof area of Chicago House, but no one focused any attention on us. Other police stations and offices, as well as a new Luxor Governorate office building under construction to the south had some windows broken, and that night the governor's house on the Nile in southern Luxor was burned down; he escaped by police boat and was back at his office the next morning! During this time, particularly during the black-out days with no Internet, we monitored the situation but continued to work and kept in close contact with the SCA, our ARCE Cairo and Luxor friends, and the other expeditions in and around town. Communication was possible

with our friends and colleagues in Cairo via telephone landlines, and back home via most telephones, despite the loss of Internet contact. The only day we missed any fieldwork was the 28th. The following Monday, the 31st, when the new government was announced and sworn in, we were back at work at all our archaeological sites. I am pleased to say that at no time was any negativity focused on foreigners, or us. Quite the contrary.

## **FEBRUARY**

On February 1st Mubarak announced that he would not run again, but would not step down. On February 2nd the Internet was restored and with it our normal contact with everyone back home, and the world. But, shockingly, that night real violence broke out in Tahrir Square in Cairo when supporters of the old regime were sent in to rough up, intimidate, and even kill the peaceful demonstrators. For several days the terror and uncertainty continued, and even foreign journalists were rounded up and harassed by the authorities. The logic of such acts defies comprehension, but the plan totally backfired. Those who might not have espoused the cause of the demonstrators in Cairo before now perceived their government sponsoring acts of violence against its own people. On February 11th, Mubarak resigned as president and left Cairo for Sharm el-Sheikh. The Egyptian army took charge until true, fair elections could be held, and the whole country breathed a huge sigh of relief. With their peaceful revolution the Egyptian people made history. We are



*Army tank in Luxor*

tremendously pleased for the Egyptians, who showed the world how it can be done.

A number of archaeological missions, particularly those with students, were obliged to leave Egypt for home when the demonstrations in Cairo gained momentum, including the undergraduates of the University of Chicago Middle Eastern Civilizations program in Cairo. Because the situation in Luxor was stable, and the SCA and tourist police retained control of the antiquities sites in Luxor and the surrounding areas, many missions there stayed to continue their work. Although prepared to leave at a moment's notice if the situation demanded, Chicago House remained in operation, with its library open for all, and our projects continued uninterrupted. Numerous colleagues and friends passed through our doors at this time. We were fortunate to have stay with us for a spell Peter Grossmann, working in Middle Egypt at Sheikh Abada/Antinoupolis with Jay and the Italian mission from the University of Florence, who came back to Luxor with Jay when their season was cut short by the revolution. Peter had excavated the sanctuary of the Thecla Church at Luxor Temple in 1983 and kindly consulted with us about the church and its many blocks that we are recording now, a great boon to the project. While Peter was in town, Mansour Boraik was able to show him some of the medieval building foundations along the Sphinx Avenue that Mansour had excavated last year. On the 23rd National Public Radio's Corey Flintoff came through town and had a very pleasant meal with us before heading back north to the action in Cairo.

Tourism, as one would expect, dropped off considerably in February, but by our season's end in mid-April was

back to 50–60 percent of normal, and Luxor was fairly busy again. In the meantime we took advantage of the quiet, focused on our archaeological work, and were able to accomplish a tremendous amount in the last three months of the season. On the 17th Margaret De Jong returned from the United States to take up drawing at the tomb of Nefersekheru, and continued until the end of the season.

### MARCH

The beginning of 2011 was certainly a time of beginnings and endings for Egypt, but also for Chicago House. I am saddened to report that Chicago House finance manager Safi Ouri was obliged to leave us at the end of January to take care of family matters in Jordan. During the eleven years she was with us she was the financial pillar of our operation in Luxor and created a solid financial foundation upon which we will base all future work. We honor her here and will miss her terribly. Safi kindly helped us find her replacement, senior accountant Essamel Sayed, and was able to introduce him to our financial



*Safi at her desk in January*



## THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



Above: Safi, Samwell, Samir, and Essam, January 27, 2011; Right: Essam, Nidaa, Basmala, and Abdel Rahman in the Chicago House library, April 2011



management system before she left. Because Essam was only able to start work with us at the beginning of March, during the interim period administrator Samir Guindy and assistant administrator Samwell Maher managed the finance office with no interruption, a testament not only to their abilities, but to the system that Safi organized so soundly and well. We welcome here Essam, his wife Nidaa, and their two children Basmala and Abdel Rahman. *Marhab!*

On March 3rd Egypt's newly appointed prime minister and most of the ministers of the interim government, including Zahi Hawass, resigned their positions. This was still an issue with the protestors in Cairo, that anyone associated with or appointed by the old regime should go. Our SCA friends told us that the foreign archaeological missions should keep their usual schedule while the Egyptian government sorted things out. So, it continued to be business as usual in Luxor for us.

One other interesting thing — now that people have had a taste of it, *everyone* is demonstrating about something now. There are peaceful demonstrations daily in Luxor for one thing or another, mainly in front of the Luxor governorate building. All month there have been demonstrations at the east and west bank antiquities inspectorates, primarily for better wages and system reform. I received word from Luxor Temple one morning that there was a large demonstration heading north on the Corniche along the temple with banners and placards and LOTS of people. We found out later that it was school kids demanding more money from the government for

school books. Another large demonstration at the governorate offices a few days later turned out to be local soccer players protesting the fact that Luxor has no official soccer team! Now that our Egyptian friends have found their collective voices, they are using them.

On March 8th structural engineer Conor Power arrived for his annual condition study of the Luxor Temple structure as part of our ongoing World Monuments Fund program there and found that the temple is in good condition. He found no discernible movement or destabilization of the Ramesses II pylons or Great Colonnade Hall columns. Based on a comparison with photographs taken in the year 2000, Conor found that there is a reduction of overall moisture levels in the temple, and that moisture wicking has subsided noticeably. His conclusion is that the east bank groundwater lowering engineering project, activated in 2006, has had a decidedly positive effect on Luxor Temple with a reduction of salt efflorescence and moisture levels in the structure. Excellent news!

In the Luxor Temple blockyard, among many other tasks Hiroko finished her annual condition study of the fragmentary material; consolidated some of the covered storage areas; moved smaller fragments to the shelves of the wall-storage areas; covered some of the plastered and painted Thecla blocks; remounted a large late-period stela in the open-air museum; and finished the Thutmose III fragment group. Over one hundred Thecla Church blocks have been moved to one holding area, and Jay has traced, photographed, and entered 118 blocks (some too big to move) into a specially designed database for processing

## THE 2010–2011 FIELD SEASON OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY



Conor and Hiroko checking the Luxor Temple eastern pylon, March 2011



Lotfi, Karim, and Hany

this summer. Already he has noted numerous joins, including blocks from a large, beautifully carved central arch, and the two granite columns and sandstone capitals that supported it. Future plans include a feasibility study for physically reconstructing some of the sanctuary blocks and architectural elements in situ as part of the comprehensive site management program for that area.

At Medinet Habu, dismantling of the Domitian gate started by Frank and the Chicago House workmen in February continued during March. Forty-three blocks (out of 68 total) are now stored on protected platforms immediately to the north of the gate and will undergo whatever conservation and consolidation might be necessary next season by Lotfi and his team. Three courses of stone blocks remain, and now that there is much less weight pushing down on the stones, there is no longer any threat of collapse. The dismantling will be finished next season, and during that time Frank and his team will also cut and shape new foundation blocks for the re-erection of the gate, scheduled to begin in 2012.

This month Lotfi and the conservation team finished the moving of fragmentary material from the old Medinet Habu blockyard to the new, protected blockyard built against the southern Ramesses III enclosure wall. Three thousand five hundred blocks and block fragments from all parts of the complex were moved during the last three seasons, and 2,450 have been documented and entered on the Medinet Habu fragment database by Julia assisted by Christian Greco, who spent part of this month with us. Also included in the move to the new storage facility was the fragmentary material stored behind the God's Wives Chapels on cement platforms. That area is now clean, the objects and blocks moved to the new blockyard, and the platforms dismantled by Chicago House. New security lighting was also installed at the request of the SCA for the facade of the blockyard. Once the moving of blocks and fragments was finished, the old mudbrick-walled blockyard east of the king's palace was dismantled and the area leveled as part of the collaborative SCA/Chicago House site management program of the Medinet Habu precinct.

We have been doing tallies at Khonsu Temple and are pleasantly surprised at the amount of material that it has been possible to document in the flooring and foundations prior to ARCE's reconstruction work at the site. To date, the reused blocks and fragments recorded at Khonsu Temple during the 2008/09, 2009/10, and 2010/11 seasons now total 652. In situ blocks from the flooring and foundations total 309, while loose blocks and fragments total 343. It's an extraordinary amount of material, and while it represents the tiniest fraction of the total reused blocks in the temple, it is giving us a significant amount of information about the earlier phases of the complex. It is clear now that Ramesses III dismantled an earlier, Eighteenth Dynasty temple to Khonsu from the time of Thutmose III, that appears to have been added onto by later kings,





*Medinet Habu Domitian gate dismantling March, 2011. Small Amun temple and Ramesses III High Gate on the left*



*Medinet Habu old blockyard being dismantled March 3, 2011, with the great mortuary temple of Ramesses III in the background*



*Alain and Emmanuelle at work in the Photo Archives, March 2011*

up to Horemheb, but perhaps including Sety I. Ramesses II did extensive renovation work within this earlier Khonsu Temple, appropriating and updating many Thutmose king figures within the sanctuary to the Ramesside style, and added original scenes to the exterior. We have limestone blocks that appear to be from an even earlier, Middle Kingdom temple to Khonsu that may go back as far as the Eleventh Dynasty. Our initial documentation is only the first phase of the work of processing the material. Subsequent research and analysis are going to give us even more information as we figure out exactly what we have. This project is just going to get more and more interesting!

On March 19th a constitutional referendum was held across the country that eliminated restrictions on political rights and civil liberties and was overwhelmingly approved by the Egyptian people. Millions of Egyptians spent hours in line to vote for the measure, including the Chicago House Egyptian staff, and their happiness was a joy to witness. (And now there are more revolutionary uprisings throughout northern Africa and the Middle East, in Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen, as the “Arab spring” spreads. One wishes that they were as peaceful and positive as Egypt’s.) That same day saw the arrival of Alain and Emmanuelle Arnaudière, who were with us for a couple of weeks to work on the Chicago House master database.

## **APRIL**

On April 4th Zahi was reinstated as minister of state for antiquities, and antiquities had stability again, at least for the time being. The future of the SCA and Egyptian antiquities in the new order is being hotly discussed by our Egyptian colleagues, and we see many changes in the wind. A union for Egyptian Egyptologists has been



*Voting day in Luxor. Samwell, Essam, and Samir show ink-tipped fingers*

formed, for instance, something that has been desired for a long time. Even the Egyptologists have a voice now!

The Epigraphic Survey concluded its work for the 2010/11 season on April 15, 2011, and everyone went home weary, but happy that we were able to continue our archaeological work in Luxor uninterrupted during this time of tremendous transition in Egypt. Our friends in Egypt were pleased that we stayed and made it clear to us that by doing so we actually helped keep things stable in Luxor. Elections are due to be held in the late fall/early winter, and then everything will change again. God willing, we will be in Luxor to witness this next exciting chapter in Egypt’s new history.

## **POSTSCRIPT: SEPTEMBER**

Before I left Luxor in April, I visited the governor to let him know that Chicago House was closing for the summer and to say goodbye. Within twenty-four hours of our visit he was replaced with a new governor, and within forty-eight hours he was in jail. I returned to Egypt in May and July for meetings in Cairo and Luxor, and while in Luxor I visited the new governor to brief him on our preservation work and history. Shortly after I left Egypt, in early August, *he* in turn was replaced.



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*The Chicago House library, April 2011*

And on July 21st, due to pressure from the Tahrir protesters, another group of ministers with ties to the old regime were removed from office, including Zahi, who is now in retirement. At the same time the Ministry of State for Antiquities was dissolved and the SCA reinstated. A new secretary general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities once again directs antiquities in Egypt. The Ministry of State for Antiquities lasted only six months, but could very well be back after the elections this winter.

Through all this, the SCA and the country remain stable, and the Epigraphic Survey is returning to resume its documentation, conservation, and restoration work in Luxor. As I write this Chicago House is being prepared for our arrival in October. I will post occasional updates and reports throughout the winter on our web page:

<http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/epi/>

Once again, let me extend my sincerest thanks to the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), former minister of state for antiquities Dr. Zahi Hawass, and all our friends and colleagues in Egypt for another productive collaboration this season. Sincerest thanks as well to those of you who continue to faithfully and generously support our preservation work in Luxor — bless you! If you are planning a trip to 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



*Open and peaceful sit-in at Luxor Temple east park, July 2011*



*Chicago House from the Nile, January 2011*

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](mailto:wr-johnson@uchicago.edu).

Please see below for our contact information in Egypt and Chicago. Best wishes, and thanks again, to you all.

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

#### ADDRESSES OF THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY

**October through March:**

Chicago House  
Luxor  
Arab Republic of EGYPT  
TEL: (001) (20) (95) 237-2525  
FAX: (001) (20) (95) 238-1620

**April through September:**

The Oriental Institute  
1155 East 58th Street  
Chicago, IL 60637  
TEL: (773) 702-9524  
FAX: (773) 702-9853

The Epigraphic Survey home page is located at:  
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*Full staff of Chicago House, 2010-2011. Photo by Yarko Kobylecky and Sue Lezon*

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### **SUPPORT THE EPIGRAPHIC SURVEY AND CHICAGO HOUSE**

Partly funded by the University of Chicago, the Epigraphic Survey relies heavily on tax-deductible private and corporate contributions and grants to support its continued efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of ancient Egypt through documentation and conservation.

Contributions may now be made on line! Go to:

<https://oi.uchicago.edu/getinvolved/donate/>

and check the “Epigraphic Survey” box. Or any of the other Oriental Institute projects listed there.

For further information on contributions to the Epigraphic Survey and the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, please contact the Oriental Institute Development Office at: (773) 702-1404 or:

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1155 East 58th Street  
Chicago, IL 60637  
Telephone: (773) 702-9514



*Chicago House front garden and new wall, July 2011*