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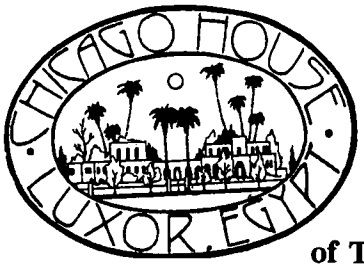

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JOURNEY TO THE "VALLEY OF TERROR"

By John Darnell, Epigrapher

For several seasons, my wife Debbie and I have been exploring the ancient roads leading from Luxor into the western desert on Sundays, our "days off" from official Epigraphic Survey duties (in a previous bulletin [Vol. IV, No. 1 (1992)] we described the early stages of our work). One of our most unexpected discoveries was a sacred precinct on the Luxor-to-Farshût desert road. After a number of such surprising finds, we knew it would be necessary to examine in depth many of the sites which we had previously identified. Following our initial reconnaissance and observation along desert routes leading west from Thebes, and two seasons of concentrated work on the Luxor terminus of the main Luxor-Farshût Road,we are now forming an exciting picture of ancient activity in the western desert.

As reported in the last Oriental Institute Annual Report, we have identified the shattered remnants of a sandstone and brick temple of the Seventeenth Dynasty atop the high desert; a fragment of the doorjamb bears the cartouches of a king Antef and a king Sobekemsaf. An associated graffito suggests that our Antef is specifically Antef V, and the orthography of the name as written on the doorjamb is consistent with this assumption. Associated with the temple area we discovered the broken statue of a man whose titles show him to have been a military official of the Second Intermediate Period. A stele of the early Third Intermediate Period, our first discovery on the temple site, apparently has a counterpart, discovered on the desert road behind Armant in the 1930's; both stelae appear to mention a "road of horses," perhaps suggesting postal and military activity. The ceramic remains are of an incredible quantity and variety, showing that, although the road never went wholly out of use, the periods of busiest activity were the Second Intermediate Period and the Saite Period.

The road on which this temple was located has many branches, one of which leads to Abydos; this fact, along with the temple's location atop the western hills, explains the presence of an epithet of Osiris on a fragment of the chapel's doorjamb, and the name of Osiris on a sliver of the lintel. A small limestone naos, fragments of a steatite statuette, and a forest of votive cairns and rough stone shrines attest to the importance of the area during the Second Intermediate Period, when the Thebans were engaged in a titanic struggle, caught between the Hyksos-dominated north and the Nubian-controlled south. The statue of the military official, and fragments

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THE GRAFFITI OF LUXOR TEMPLE

By Richard Jasnow, Senior Epigrapher

On a walk through Luxor Temple, it is the magnificent New Kingdom reliefs which deservedly first claim one's attention. However, the attentive visitor soon observes that many other small inscriptions or scenes have been carved upon the original decoration or in the blank areas below them. These graffiti range from elaborate and well executed scenes to the crudest scratches. In completing the documentation of the Luxor Colonnade, we naturally wished to include copies of all such later additions.

Graffiti are, in fact, an important source material for the Egyptologist. The ancient Egyptians left innumerable drawings and inscriptions on rock-cliffs and buildings. In the limestone hills of Western Thebes, for example, are thousands of graffiti. Despite their intrinsically modest character, these texts have attracted the attention of some of the most famous Egyptologists. Howard Carter and Jaroslav Cerny, to cite only two distinguished names, devoted much time to the western Theban graffiti.

Whether on a cliff face or a temple wall, graffiti can be maddeningly difficult to record. First of all, they are often lightly scratched into the plastered surface of the temple walls. Now that the plaster is generally gone, only the bases of the cuts are preserved. One can walk by a wall a thousand times without seeing any trace of a graffito. One day, the sunlight may hit the stone in a particular way, and a new inscription is suddenly revealed. A further obstacle to the interpretation of graffiti is that they are rarely done by first-rate artists or scribes; the workmanship is at times amazingly crude.

In order to record the graffiti, we formed a small "graffito hit-team," consisting of Christina Di Cerbo (artist), John Darnell (epigrapher) and myself. Tina would trace the graffito on plastic. All three of us would generally be present at this initial stage. She later transferred this plastic copy onto tracing paper, applying the standard Epigraphic Survey drawing conventions. John and I would thereupon take a copy of her drawing to the temple, and check it against the wall once more. Tina would then incorporate the corrections into the facsimile.

The Survey Egyptologists have recorded about 60 pre-modern graffiti in the area of the Colonnade Hall. There are inscriptions in hieroglyphs, Demotic, Coptic, Greek, Carian, and Arabic. Among the pictorial graffiti are renderings of kings, gods, and animals. This tally does not include the miscellaneous recent graffiti found upon the upper courses of the columns in the Hall. There are, for example, numerous nineteenth century travelers' names preserved on the upper

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Valley of Terror *(continued from p. 1)*

of Pan Grave pottery, indicating the presence of Nubian auxiliaries of the Thebans, suggest that the road was of military importance as well.

The Luxor-Farshût Road can lead not only to the religious center of Abydos, but to the oases of the Western Desert as well, where important episodes in the Theban victory at the beginning of the New Kingdom were played out. Traffic between Thebes and the oases along the road is evinced by an abundance of pottery made of characteristic "oasis ware" clays. The Second Stele of Kamose describes Theban activity in the Western Desert, and relates that Kamose intercepted a letter from the Hyksos ruler in the north to his Nubian counterpart in the south, proposing a final combined attack on the Thebans. The Theban rulers appear to have adopted a policy of controlling desert routes to the east and west out of the Theban area; unable to attack successfully to the north or south for some time, they instead patrolled the deserts and prevented the dreaded combined actions of northern and southern foes. Perhaps as a memory of the struggles which occurred on the desert plateau during the Second Intermediate Period, New Kingdom religious texts sometimes refer poetically to the Western Gebel as the "Mountain of the Battlefield of the Two Lands." During this past season further evidence of military activity from the time of the Seventeenth Dynasty has come to light in the form of two poorly preserved—but nonetheless impressive—brick and dry stone watchtowers on one of the northern tributary routes of the main Luxor-Farshût Road.

The main Luxor-Farshût Road, and its many tributaries, come together at a point near the center of the desert filling the Qena Bend of the Nile. The point where the road descends from the high desert before crossing the low desert is called the Wadi el-Hôl, "Valley of Terror." During the 1930's, while searching for prehistoric graffiti, the German rock-drawing expert Hans A. Winkler, working for the desert expedition organized by Sir Robert Mond, reported an abundance of pharaonic graffiti in the area, but thus far only one of these, albeit the most grandiose, has been published. It was clear to us that the site must contain an abundance of information regarding the use of the road. A few weeks ago, with a Land Rover and a Jeep, accompanied by Survey Egyptologists Richard Jasnow and Tina Di Cerbo, and by our Luxor inspector Ramadan, we traveled into the Wadi el-Hôl. As we drove over the low desert toward the distant mountain, we noted as many landmarks as we could, and rejoiced at the small stone cairns which indicated that we might indeed be on the right track. After a relatively short trip, we saw a sight which confirmed that we were on the ancient caravan track--a 2-meter-deep mound of pottery compacted in animal dung, the waste of ages of caravans. Scattered about atop and within the mound were fragments of barrel-shaped and lentoid oasis water jars. We were on the ancient Theban track to the oases. And at the Wadi el-Hôl itself, we found another such dump of pottery.

The graffiti were even more abundant than we had expected, and we located a concentration of graffiti which had eluded the initial explorers of the site. The inscriptions range in date from the Middle Kingdom to the early Islamic period, but most are texts and scenes of the late Twelfth Dynasty and

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Luxor Temple Graffiti *(continued from p. 1)*

portions of the columns. The Colonnade was full of debris until the late 19th century, which made it quite easy to scrawl one's name on such now inaccessible spots.

Perhaps the most significant graffiti are high up on the eastern facade of the Colonnade. This portion of the facade is obscured from view below by the portico of Ramesses II. But having climbed up to the Ramesside roof on a two-section ladder, one is rewarded not only by a splendid view, but also by a number of graffiti carved onto the original Eighteenth Dynasty facade relief. There are some 14 graffiti in situ here. The largest one is figure of the god Amun, but there are also several votive inscriptions left by Greeks or Egyptians with names such as Archilles and Panakhates. More exotic are the inscriptions written in Carian, a rather mysterious Anatolian language written in a distinctive script. Carians came to Egypt beginning about the seventh century B.C., and were especially employed as mercenary soldiers. Since the number of Carian texts is quite small, our Luxor examples are not unimportant. The job of copying these Carian inscriptions was made more difficult because of the many random scratches on the wall. Our copies have now been submitted to specialists in the Carian language, and we are eagerly awaiting their analysis. It is unclear just why there seems to be a concentration of Greek and Carian graffiti in this portion of the temple. No Carian inscription appears to be preserved elsewhere in Luxor Temple.

One intriguing corpus of material is the group of sixty-two block fragments which Ray Johnson has identified as coming from the Colonnade facade. Several fragments also have Greek graffiti on them. Most are in a sad state of preservation, but one legible Greek inscription may be translated as "the votive-inscription to the Ruler of the World (Greek *kosmos*)." This may well be a Greek rendering of the Egyptian *nb p.t* "lord of heaven," a common epithet of Amun. The graffito is in fact located on a large figure of that deity.

More graffiti are carved on the facade below the Ramesside roof-line. The visitor who cares to walk behind the east colossus beneath the Ramesside portico will see at ground level an impressive scene showing the high official Pinudjem and his family offering to Amun, Mut, and Khonsu. This graffito, dated to the Twenty-first Dynasty, has in fact been much discussed in Egyptological literature. However, the Survey's careful facsimile will be the first published copy of the scene. There is another graffito higher up on the facade which belongs to the same rather poorly documented period of Egyptian history. Quite close to that is a very nicely carved figure of the god Khonsu as a naked child. It is accompanied by a fine inscription in delicate tiny hieroglyphs. The dedicatee wishes for himself "praise, power, a long lifetime, and an excellent old age." Scattered about on the facade are other graffiti, chiefly crudely done faces or figures of kings or gods, the aspiring artists inspired no doubt by the magnificent original wall reliefs.

The only Demotic Egyptian inscription in our concession, probably of late Ptolemaic date, is on a doorjamb at the entrance to the Colonnade. This is an example of a wish expressed by many ancient graffiti writers of that period: "(May) the good name of Petamenope, son of Pamenekhonsu, remain (before the god)."

Within the portal thickness itself are several Christian period crosses at ground level. Higher up on the eastern thickness is a two-line Coptic inscription, probably to be dated between the fourth and eighth centuries A.D. This graffito is significant since it is on the original Ramesses II relief, which had been built over by the later pharaoh Sety II. The location of the Coptic text may show that already by this time much of the Colonnade had been dismantled.

The west exterior wall of the Colonnade is best known for the battle scenes of Ramesses II. While those reliefs are to be recorded by the Egyptian Documentation Center, the Survey is publishing the post-Ramesside additions. We carefully examined the western wall, which receives good raking light in the afternoon. The results of our search were 16 graffiti. These include a six foot high figure of the god Amun. Though sadly damaged, we decided that this Amun figure deserved the full Chicago House treatment. Survey photographer Jerry Kobylecky photographed the scene and produced drawing enlargements for Tina, which John and I collated. There are also a number of Greek names and short texts. One Roman Period visitor, for example, wrote "I, Korax, have come (here)." These Greek inscriptions are in fact particularly lightly incised, and were therefore quite difficult to recognize and decipher. Among the catch too is a large boat, with rigging proudly set and a surprisingly detailed sketch of a horse. It is sometimes difficult to know, of course, just how old such graffiti is; our horse at any rate is visible on photographs of the early 20th century. Jean and Helen Jacquet have drawn the elevation of the western exterior wall, and we can thus present the reader with the precise locations of our graffiti.

A few meters to the south, in the north west corner of the Amenhotep III sun court is a very large roofing block, which may have come from the Colonnade Hall roof. The block contains several "feet-graffiti," that is, the outlines of feet within which the ancient priestly scribes inscribed their name and titles. The hieroglyphs are often crude; the priests were quite probably not especially practiced at carving hieroglyphs, but would generally use the hieratic script. Such texts, with their names and titles, can help us to understand the inner workings of the temple. Jerry took a series of photographs of the texts. These proved to be a great help to us, since the inscriptions are now upside down, making them rather awkward to study.

If graffiti seldom contain information of earth-shaking importance, they nevertheless certainly do convey a personal touch lacking from the "official" ritual temple scenes. I believe that all of us on the "graffito hit-team" have grown rather fond of these idiosyncratic creatures. Indeed, the Egyptologist infected by the "graffito-bug" can never walk by a temple wall or cliff face without peering closely at it in the hope of discovering a hitherto unsuspected "specimen."

END

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Valley of Terror *(continued from p. 3)*

Thirteenth Dynasty. The texts are not the grand expedition accounts of the same period found in the Wadi Hammamat and the Sinai, but are in general the more lowly commemorations of lower level officials on more mundane duty--excepting of course the large and formal stele of the Thirteenth Dynasty ruler Sobekhotep III. This, combined with the enormous quantity of the texts, suggests continuous and everyday use of the road. There are inscriptions dated to the reign of Amenemhat III, most left by officials from the town of Hou. There are scenes of Saluki-like dogs hunting, and one of a man holding a New Kingdom-style shield and two spears: these may be memorials of the police patrols—known as the "Medjoy" in ancient Egypt —and their dogs. (At Hou, on the northern end of a branch of this road, Petrie discovered graves of Medjoy, and one tomb contained the bodies of the dogs with which they appear to have patrolled the desert.) In one text, apparently of Thirteenth Dynasty date, the author tells us what he was doing there: "Spending the day ... beneath this mountain on holiday," perhaps resting and gathering forces before a journey into the Western Desert. Another graffito was the cartouche of Amenhotep II atop a bow, a device attested on several statues and in graffiti at Aswan, an allusion to the athletic strength and shooting prowess of the son of Thutmosis III.

During the coming season we hope to continue studying the Luxor-Farshût desert road and its tributaries. We have already located numerous promising sites for further exploration. Our discoveries thus far have already begun to shed light on Theban trade with the oases, Seventeenth Dynasty military strategy, and private, high-desert religious practices of the ancient Egyptians. Further examination of the graffiti in the Wadi el-Hôl may shed further light on the transition between the Thirteenth and Seventeenth Dynasties in Upper Egypt.

END

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