

The Brooklyn Museum's 2017 Season of Fieldwork at the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak

by Richard Fazzini

Abstract

The 2017 season was devoted primarily to the documentation and study of the precinct's Sakhmet statues and to a few small preservation and restoration projects. At the request of the Ministry of Antiquities (MOA), the reeds in the sacred lake were cut back. A large door jamb block of Ramesses II lying inside the mud brick north wing of Temple A's second pylon was cleared and protected. In the process a 25th dynasty inscription was discovered on a previously-buried side of the block. Finally, a fallen lower half of a Sakhmet lying in the dirt in Temple A's first court was placed on a mastaba.

The archaeological expedition to the Precinct of Mut at South Karnak is a project of the Brooklyn Museum conducted under the auspices of the American Research Center in Egypt and with the permission of the Ministry of Antiquities.¹ The 2017 season took place March 4-20. It was a study season with no excavation.

Preservation and Restoration

The expedition carried out several small projects intended to preserve and maintain the site.

¹ The Expedition acknowledges with gratitude the cooperation and assistance of officials of the the Ministry of Antiquities, in particular Dr. Khaled el-Enany, Minister of Antiquities; Dr. Mohamed Ismail, Director of Foreign Missions Affairs and Permanent Committees; Dr. Mohamed Abdel-Aziz, General Director for Southern Upper Egypt; Mr. Mustafa Waziri, General Director for Luxor; Mr. Amin Amar, General Director for Karnak; Ahmed El-Leithy, Chief Inspector, Mut Precinct; and Shemaa Mahmoud Ahmed and Yusuf Mohamed Ahmed, the MOA Inspectors assigned to the Expedition.

The staff for this season were Richard A. Fazzini, Egyptologist and Director; Mary E. McKercher, Assistant Director, archaeologist and photographer; and Jacobus van Dijk, Egyptologist and epigrapher. Funding for the 2017 season was provided by R. Fazzini and M. McKercher.

Sacred Lake

At the request of the SCA, the expedition cut back the reeds at the north end of the east and west arms of the lake. Figs. 1-2 shows the areas at the start and end of the season.

Temple A, 2nd Pylon

Temple A's 2nd Pylon is built primarily of blocks re-used from earlier buildings. Its south wing is of stone, but the north wing has a mud brick core that was faced with stone (fig. 3).

Many years ago the expedition discovered a large sandstone door jamb of Ramesses II lying in the remains of the mud brick core of the north wing; it is visible at the bottom of fig. 3 and in figs. 4-5. It is both too heavy and too fragile to be moved.² Since its discovery, the block had become partly re-buried, so this year the expedition decided to clear it completely and build a small brick wall around it to protect it from drifting dirt (fig.5).

The Ramesside decoration is on two adjacent sides of the block (fig. 6). The short side bears the lower part of a sunk relief of a god, facing left. The two rows of text below give the beginning of the name of the door and the beginning of the titulary of Ramesses II. The long side of the block preserves the lower parts of four columns terminating in cartouches above gold signs. Below are two rows of text, the upper one dating the block to year 37 of Ramesses II's reign. The lower line identifies the temple from which the block came (presumably Temple A) as a "Temple of Millions of Years" of Ramesses II and provides part of the name: "Men-Ramesses-Akh-en-Amun..." (Ramesses, who is beneficial to Amun...).³

When we cleared the block completely, we discovered that the west face as it now lies (i.e., the bottom of the Ramesside block) bears a shallow sunk relief that is Kushite in style (fig. 7). It shows the crowns of two facing figures separated by 4 columns of text. The figure on the left wears a sun-disk surmounted by two plumes with two cobras at the bottom of the disk. The

² We removed the large, undecorated block visible in fig. 4 beside the door jamb as it was hiding part of a re-used relief in the pylon's east face.

³ This block has been mentioned before, most recently in R. Fazzini, "Some Comments on the Preserved Figural Decoration", in R. Fazzini and J. van Dijk (eds.), *The First Pylon of the Mut Temple, South Karnak: Architecture, Decoration, Inscriptions* OLA 236 (Leuven, etc., 2015), p.5 n. 2. While K. Kitchen published a copy of the texts (KRI VII, 48, no. 414), the block itself has never been illustrated.

crown of the figure on the right consists of two plumes. The remains of a text above and behind this latter figure identify him as Amun, but the god on the left is unidentified.

Because of its findspot, it is possible that this block was re-used in the facing of the north wing of the 25th Dynasty pylon, of which only the shallowly-carved base lines remain. However, Jacobus van Dijk has suggested that it may, instead, belong to the birth cycle of Taharqa on the north wall of Temple A's First Court⁴ and specifically to the scene in which the king and his royal *ka* are presented by one god to another⁵ (fig. 8). All that remains *in situ* are the lower halves of the two deities with 2 columns of text between them, and the feet of the king and his *ka*, which are close together and face to the left.

The presentation of the king and his royal *ka* is known from several royal/divine birth cycles from the New Kingdom onward. In Thebes, two cycles are from Dynasty 18, at Deir el-Bahri (Hatshepsut) and the Luxor Temple (Amunhotep III), while the third, in Temple A, dates to Dynasty 25 (Taharqa).⁶ At Deir el Bahri, Thoth presents Hatshepsut to Amun.⁷ At the Luxor Temple, Montu brings the king and his *ka* to Amun.⁸ If Dr. van Dijk is correct, the scene in Temple A is rather different: Amun presents the king and his *ka* rather than having them presented to him. The crown of the figure on the left suggests the deity is Montu, but it should be noted, as E. Werner pointed out in his unpublished dissertation, that the attributes of Montu and Khonsu were sometimes confused beginning even in the reign of Ramesses II,⁹ and Temple A is

⁴ See M. Pillet, "Les scènes de naissance et de circoncision dans le temple nord-est de Mout, à Karnak," *ASAE* 52 (1952), pp. 78-104. The presentation scene is fig. 3 on p. 80.

⁵ Personal communication. Dr. van Dijk will be publishing this block in detail, so only a brief discussion is presented here.

⁶ See H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs: Studien zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos* (2. ergänzte Auflage) (Wiesbaden, 1986). The presentation scene is his Scene XIV.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148 and pl. 14. Brunner originally described the presenting deity as falcon-headed, either Montu or Horus, but in his Postscript (p. 229) he identified him as Montu for epigraphical reasons.

⁹ E. Werner, *The God Montu: From the Earliest Attestation to the End of the New Kingdom* PhD diss. (Yale University, 1985), pp. 204-205. C. Sheikholeslami also notes that at Karnak in the New Kingdom, "some of Montu's association with kingship was transferred to Khonsu": C. Sheikholeslami, "The End of the Libyan Period and the Resurgence of the Cult of Montu," in G. Broekman, R. Demarée and O. Kaper (eds.), *The Libyan Period in*

dedicated to a form of Khonsu, who may be shown wearing double plumes with sun disk and one or two uraei.¹⁰ In favor of the identification of the deity as Montu, though, is the text between the gods, in which Amun asks the second deity to protect the king and endow him with strength, and makes reference to the “work of warfare,” a phrase regularly associated with Montu.¹¹ Nonetheless Montu’s presence in Temple A remains unusual. While the cult of Montu enjoyed renewed prominence in Dynasty 25,¹² and relations between the priesthoods of Montu and Mut were close,¹³ there is no evidence for the worship of Montu in either the Mut Temple or Temple A. Admittedly the remaining decoration in both temples is rather fragmentary. If the receiving deity is Montu, his unusual presence receiving a child king and *ka* at South Karnak may be related to the desire of the Kushite kingship to enhance its legitimacy by associating itself with Thebes’ traditional god.¹⁴ It could also demonstrate that the king (Taharqa) wished himself to be a competent Kushite conqueror. This relief will clearly reward further study.

Sakhmet Statue in Temple A’s First Court

The Sakhmet statue in this court,¹⁵ discovered and restored by M. Pillet in the 1920s, was lying broken and partly buried on the north side of the court (fig. 9). We moved the pieces of the statue onto a mastaba that we built to hold the statue and hope to be able to restore it in a future season.

Egypt. Historical and Cultural Studies into the 21st-24th Dynasties: Proceedings of a Conference at Leiden University, 25-27 October 2007 (Leuven, 2009), p. 362, with n. 9 referring to a forthcoming article by Sheikholeslami.

¹⁰ E.g., on the doorway of Pylon VIII at Karnak (Werner, *op. cit.*, fig. 46), and in the Temple of Amun-Re-Horakhty at Karnak (*ibid.*, fig. 48).

¹¹ I thank Dr. van Dijk for this observation and for the reference to the hymn to Imhotep son of Ptah (*Urk.* VIII, 145) where Montu is also asked to strengthen his arm.

¹² C. Sheikholeslami, *op. cit.*, pp. 361-374.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.362.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 362.

¹⁵ Brooklyn Sakhmet inventory no. 210; lower half (excluding base) h: 82 cm; w: 61 cm. Torso: h: 42 cm; w: 50 cm; d: 33 cm.

Only traces of the inscription on the right side of the throne remain, but when we turned the lower half of the statue over, we discovered that the inscription on the left side is completely preserved; it is shown in fig. 9. Pillet had never recorded it, so it is essentially new inscription that associates Sakhmet with Bastet.¹⁶

Study of Sakhmet statues

We continued our documentation of the site's Sakhmet statues and were able to identify several epithets that were known from earlier publications but that we had not been able to find in earlier seasons. These epithets are all on statues whose surfaces have deteriorated, making the inscriptions difficult to read.

We have taken careful measurements of the statues and their salient features, noting particular items of decoration and style. Our goal is to publish a complete record of the Sakhmet statues within the precinct in the near future. This year's work resulted in the re-numbering of a few statues in the inventory produced in 2016, and the re-arrangement of some of the fragments. Revised plans and general photographs were given to the SCA in Luxor.

During our study of fragments in the Mut Temple's second court, we realized that we have pieces of a second colossal statue on the same scale as the one uncovered by Benson and Gourlay¹⁷ (fig. 10) whose head is now in the Luxor Museum.¹⁸ Two adjoining pieces of the left side of a throne¹⁹ are shown in fig. 11. They cannot belong to the Benson and Gourlay statue as the left side of that statue is preserved. Fig. 12 shows three other fragments probably from the

¹⁶ For other Sakhmet epithets added by the Brooklyn Museum expedition, see R. Fazzini, *Report on the 2016 Season of Fieldwork by the Brooklyn Museum Mut Expedition*, online at www.brooklynmuseum.org/features/mut.

¹⁷ M. Benson, J. Gourlay, *The Temple of Mut in Asher* (London, 1899), pp. 37-38 and pl. X. Brooklyn Sakhmet inventory no. 139: h: 145 cm (break at chest to break at ankles); w: 178 cm; d: 147 cm.

¹⁸ A. el-Shahawy, *Luxor Museum: The Glory of Ancient Thebes* (Cairo, 2005), pp. 104-105, unfortunately with no dimensions given. Benson and Gourlay state that the head measured 3 ft. 11 in. from the top of the disk to the bottom of the chin. The approximate height of the face from brow to chin is 50 cm according to rough measurements we made in 2017.

¹⁹ Brooklyn Sakhmet inventory nos. 121.2 (side of throne) and 121.3 (upper part of throne). Dimensions of 121.2: h: 62 cm; w: 74 cm; d: ca. 64 cm. Dimensions of 121.3: h: 70 cm; w: 62; d: 81 cm.

same statue: the right side of a wig and torso down to the right breast (which wears a rosette);²⁰ the left side of what seems clearly to be the same torso, although the surface is too worn to show the rosette on the breast;²¹ and the remains of a head, with only the right ear, part of the disk and uraeus, the sides of the cheeks and chin, and part of the lioness's mane preserved.²² None of these pieces belongs to the Benson and Gourlay statue, which has a complete face and the rear part of the relevant section of wig.

²⁰ Brooklyn Sakhmet inventory no. 147; h: 124 cm; w: c. 30 cm; d: 87 cm. Width of lappet: 18 cm.

²¹ Brooklyn Sakhmet inventory no. 228; h: 79 cm; w: 46 cm; d: 31 cm. Width of lappet: 18 cm.

²² Brooklyn Sakhmet inventory no. 270; overall h: 80 cm; w: 52 cm; d: 46 cm. H of face: 50 cm.



Fig. 1 Reed cutting: east arm of sacred lake at start and end of season



Fig. 2 Reed cutting: west arm of sacred lake at start and end of season.



Fig. 3 View to south of Temple A's 2nd Pylon. Ramesses II doorjamb is in lower part of picture.



Fig. 4 Ramesses II doorjamb re-used in Temple A's 2nd Pylon; cleared of dirt.



Fig. 5 Mud brick wall built around north and west sides of block to protect it from drifting dirt.



Fig. 6 Ramesside door jamb: photographs of adjacent sides (top) and hand copy of relief and text.

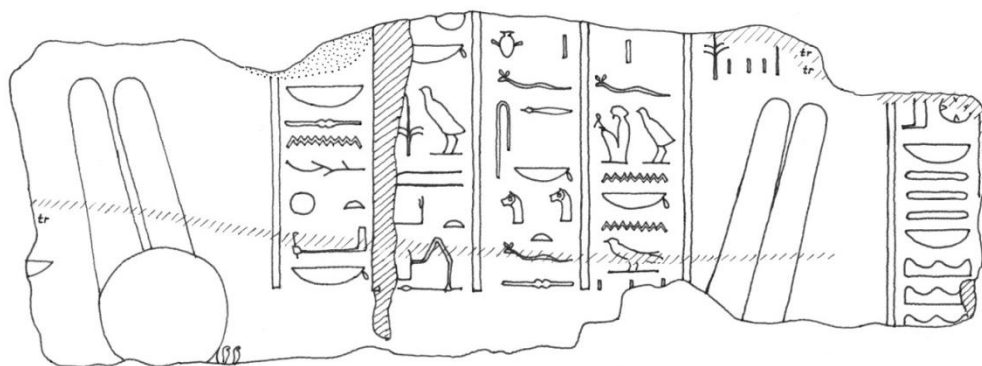


Fig. 7 Photograph and hand copy of the Kushite relief and inscription on the west side (bottom) of the re-used Ramesses II door jamb. (hand copy: J. van Dijk)



Fig. 8. General view of the presentation scene on the north wall of Temple A's First Court.



Fig. 9: Sakhmet no. 210 in Temple A's 1st Court: at start of season (top); pieces on new mastaba (bottom); text on left side of throne (right).



Fig. 10. Large Sakhmet statue in the Mut Temple's second court discovered by Benson and Gourlay. The head is in the Luxor Museum.



Fig. 11. Two adjoining pieces of the left side of a throne of a second Sakhmet on the same scale as the statue in fig. 9.



Fig. 12. Right side of wig and torso (left), damaged face with disk and uraeus (top) and fragment of left torso (bottom), probably from the same statue as the throne in fig. 10.