

The Brooklyn Museum's 2018 Season of Fieldwork at the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak

by Richard Fazzini

Abstract

The 2018 season was devoted primarily to the continued documentation and study of the precinct's Sakhmet statues and to a few small preservation and restoration projects. Retaining walls and a stairway were built in the excavated area east of the Thutmoside gateway to make it accessible to visitors. The broken Sakhmet statue in Temple A's First Court, which had been placed on a mastaba in 2017, was restored in 2018, and dispersed pieces of a second Sakhmet statue were restored to their original position.

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 2018 season took place January 20 – February 7. Because of a serious illness of the expedition's director early in the season, it had to be cut short, and the planned excavation west of the Taharqa Gate did not take place.

Site Management

Vegetation control: As we do every year, we cut back the grass and camel thorn in and around the site's main monuments.

Thutmoside Gateway: In 1983 the Brooklyn Museum expedition discovered a gate west of the Mut Temple that was inscribed with the names of Thutmosis III and Thutmosis II (probably replacing

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 Saghir, General Director for Karnak; Mr. Ahmed El-Leithy, Chief Inspector, Mut Precinct; and Mme Mai Yusuf Abul Hagag, the MOA Inspector assigned to the Expedition. We also gratefully acknowledge the work of MOA conservators Mr. Salah Salim and Mr. Mohamed Abdu, who restored the Sakhmet statue in Temple A's First Court.

The staff for this season were Richard A. Fazzini, Egyptologist and Director; Mary E. McKercher, Assistant Director, archaeologist and photographer; Jacobus van Dijk, Egyptologist and epigrapher; and Julia Harvey van Dijk, archaeologist and pottery expert. Funding for the 2018 season was provided by R. Fazzini and M. McKercher.

Hatshepsut's name).² The Johns Hopkins University expedition cleared the gate fully and excavated an area to its east in 2001. Although the site has been open to visitors since 2014, the gate has remained inaccessible to visitors as there was no way to get down to it. The Thutmoside gate is one of the earliest preserved monuments in the precinct, so access to it is important.

This season we cleared the area to the east of the gate of the grass and blown dirt that encumbered the area (fig. 1), constructed mud brick retaining walls along the sides of the area, and built a mud brick stairway in the northeast corner of the square to allow people to get to the gate (fig. 2). We also installed a barrier of posts and rope as a safety measure (fig. 3).

Preservation and Restoration - Sakhmet Statues

Statue in Temple A's First Court

Maurice Pillet found an almost-complete Sakhmet statue in Temple A's First Court in the 1924-25 season,³ and is presumably the one who restored it, although he doesn't mention the restoration specifically. The restoration had failed in succeeding years and the statue lay broken and partially buried in dirt for decades. In 2017 we moved the pieces of the statue (no. 210 in the Sakhmet inventory) onto a mastaba (fig. 4), with a view to restoring it. In 2018, the two Egyptian conservators from Karnak consolidated and restored the statue (fig. 5), which now stands on its mastaba in Temple A. The statue is preserved from the base to the left shoulder. The right side of both the lower and upper parts was severely damaged. The left hand and the upper parts of the feet were found and re-attached.

Statue in the Mut Temple's First Court

Two adjoining fragments of text found on the mastaba east of the precinct entrance (fig. 6, top) proved to belong to Sakhmet no. 59+25 (according to the Sakhmet inventory) on the west side of the Mut Temple's First Court. A third fragment in the southwest corner of that court was found to belong to the base of the statue, completing the the text. The three pieces were put back in their proper position on Sakhmet 59+25 (Fig. 6).

² See R. Fazzini, "Some Aspects of the Precinct of the Goddess Mut in the New Kingdom," in E. Ehrenberg (ed.), *Leaving No Stones Unturned. Essays on the Ancient Near East and Egypt in Honor of Donald P. Hansen* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 2002), pp. 63-71.

³ M. Pillet, "Rapport sur les travaux de Karnak" (1924-1925), *ASAE* 25, fasc. 1, p. 17

Upper and Lower Halves of a Statue on the Mastaba South of the Taharqa Gate

We had intended to join what we thought were the upper and lower halves of a large Sakhmet statue on the mastaba south of the Taharqa Gate (nos. 247, 252 in the inventory) (fig. 7). When Salah Salim, the conservator, examined the two halves he observed that they are made of different stone: the lower half is diorite with pink inclusions only, and the upper half is diorite with white inclusions only (fig. 7). The distribution of the inclusions is consistent throughout each piece, even at the points where the upper and lower halves should have joined. This strongly suggests that they are pieces of two different statues and so had to be left as they were.

Study and Documentation

Temple A, Second Pylon

In 2017 we discovered that the west face of the doorjamb of Ramesses II lying on the remains of Temple A's Second Pylon was decorated in sunk relief that is Kushite in style. According to Dr. Jacobus van Dijk, the 25th Dynasty decoration formed part of the Taharqa birth cycle reliefs decorating the north wall of the temple's First Court.⁴

The hieroglyphs at the very top of the inscription (i.e., the lower edge of the block in its present position) were masked by a block of stone that almost touches the inscription. This year we cleared the block, intending to remove it so that the inscription could be fully visible. However, the block and the one to its south that we also uncovered this year, proved to be part of the foundations of the north face of the pylon (fig. 8) and could not be removed. We were able to clear enough of the dirt around it to allow a more complete view of the signs at the top of the inscription, of which only one was complete (fig. 9).

Documentation of Sakhmet statues

We continued our documentation of the site's Sakhmet statues, confirming measurements taken in 2017 and re-photographing texts and features as needed. We also painted inventory numbers on those statues that are in the inventory given to the SCA but had not had their numbers added to the statues themselves. Our intent is to publish all the Precinct's Sakhmet statues within the next year or so.

⁴ R. Fazzini, "The Brooklyn Museum's 2017 Season of Excavation at the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak", pp. 2-4; to be available at www.brooklynmuseum.org/features/mut

In 1992 we excavated the Roman Period pier at the southeast corner of the Mut Temple and the wall running along the south side of the Mut Temple from the pier to the east side of the Contra Temple (fig. 10). Like the contemporary wall on the east side of the Mut Temple, this wall was built of mud brick laid atop several courses of baked brick. Only the lower, baked brick courses of the south wall remain, and they had collapsed either partially or completely to the south. A very deteriorated diorite statue of a seated figure had been incorporated into the baked brick wall (fig. 10). When we looked more closely at the statue this year, we realized it is most likely a Sakhmet statue (figs. 11-13), broken diagonally from the left shoulder to the right side of the torso. The figure sits on a throne that is clearly visible in figs. 11-12. From the lack of definition of the legs, it appears the statue is of a female wearing a long robe. What is left of the right hand lies flat on the right knee, while the left hand is closed to hold the ankh (faintly visible) that is characteristic of seated Sakhmet statues (fig. 13). No details remain, suggesting it was either unfinished or in a very deteriorated condition when it was built into the wall. Remains of brick and mortar can be seen on the right knee and the lap (figs. 12, 13). This statue has now been added to the expedition's inventory of Sakhmet statues in the precinct as no. 295.



Fig. 1 Cutting grass in the square east of the Thutmoside Gateway.

Fig. 2 Looking east through the gateway at the new retaining walls and stairway at the end of the season.



Fig. 3 General view northeast of the Thutmoside Gateway with the new stairway and the protective post and rope barrier in place.



Fig.4 The Sakhmet statue in Temple A's First Court at the start of the season.



Fig. 5 The statue at the end of the season after conservation.



Fig. 6 Sakhmet 59+25 on the west side of the Mut Temple's First Court at the end of the season.
 Top right: The two fragments of text found on the mastaba east of the precinct entrance.
 Left and bottom: the inscribed fragments and the newly-discovered section of the base restored to their original position



Fig. 7 The lower and upper halves of what was thought to be a single statue on the mastaba south of the Taharqa Gate (top). The differences in the inclusions in the diorite (bottom) proved they are from two different statues.



Fig. 8 Looking north at the two newly-revealed foundation blocks in Temple A's Second Pylon. The arrow rests on the block that obscures part of the Dynasty 25 text on the block to the right.



Fig. 9 The single complete hieroglyph (outlined) hidden by the foundation block.

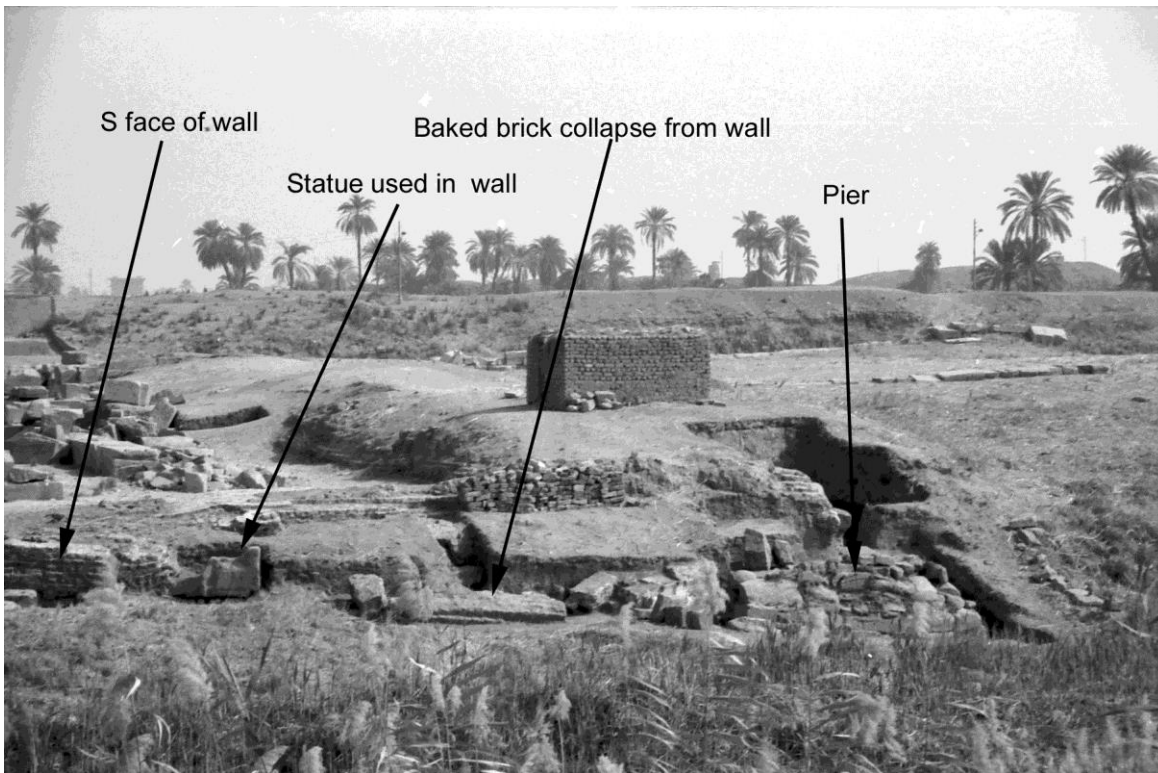


Fig. 10 Photograph of the excavation of the pier at the southeast corner of the Mut Temple, the collapsed Roman Period baked brick wall, and the statue used as part of the wall (1992).



Fig. 11 Looking down on the left side and front of the statue. The head is missing, but the left arm and the side of the throne are clearly visible.



Fig. 12 The right side of the statue, with remains of brick and mortar on the side of the right leg. The right arm and the top of the throne are clear.

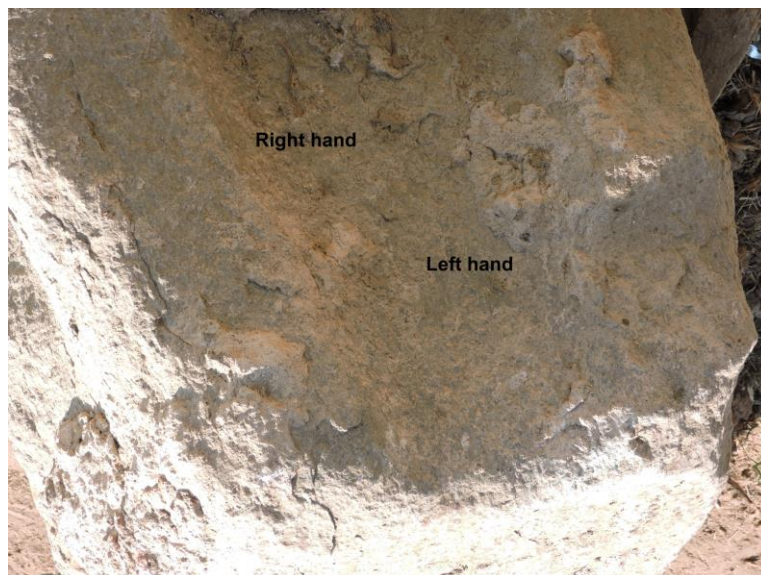


Fig. 13 The lap of the statue with the right hand lying flat and the left hand bent to clasp the ankh, which is faintly visible.