

## **Preliminary Report on the 1996-2001 Seasons of Fieldwork at the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak**

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The Expedition to the Precinct of Mut is a project of the Brooklyn Museum of Art conducted in association with the Detroit Institute of Arts and under the auspices of the American Research Center in Egypt. In 2001, the Expedition was joined by a team of archaeologists from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore led by Dr. Betsy Bryan.

During the four seasons of fieldwork between 1996 and 2001<sup>1</sup>, Brooklyn's Expedition concentrated its excavation efforts on the sandstone porches in front of the Mut Temple's mud brick First Pylon (Fig. 1). From the preserved decoration, it has long been clear that in their present state these Porches are at least mostly Ptolemaic in date. As they incorporate sandstone blocks and columns drums of Taharqa's reign, however, it is clear that the Ptolemaic structures may have replaced, in part, the porches mentioned in an inscription that can be dated to the reign of Taharqa in the Mut Temple, written by Montuemhat, Fourth Prophet of Amun, Mayor of Thebes and Governor of Upper Egypt during late Dynasty 25 and early 26<sup>2</sup>.

When the Expedition began in 1976, only the columns and engaged columns at the south end of the porches (i.e., those closest to the north face of the pylon) were visible. Between 1996 and 1999, the Expedition completed clearing the East Porch, revealing that only the bases of the other columns making up this Porch have survived. Only the fourth column of the east row (numbering from the north) remains, fallen across the width of the porch. Work during 1996-99 has demonstrated this column rests upon an area where the paving was robbed out, and all manner of stone debris dumped into the void created thereby. Two of the interesting finds in this debris were a damaged and unfinished colossal head in yellowish quartzite of Dynasty 18's King Amunhotep III and pieces of an over-lifesize statue of Montuemhat in purplish quartzite.

North of this column, the paving of the colonnade is preserved, although the sandstone paving blocks are badly deteriorated. A thick layer of ashy debris mixed with broken sandstone blocks, and containing relatively little pottery covered the paving. What pottery was found seems to date to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD or later. South of the robbed out area, the Expedition uncovered a foundation made up of 3 courses of large blocks (Fig. 2). From the level of the lowest course came a fragment of a painted limestone stela in the Amarna style. The present structure seems to represent at least three phases of construction. The earliest is the Dynasty 18-19 lower course, possibly the remains of the base of one of the colossal statues of Mut (or a queen as Mut?) represented in a relief depiction of the Mut Precinct in the tomb of

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<sup>2</sup> J. Leclant, *Montouemhat, quatrième prophète d'Amon, 'prince de la ville'*, IFAO, *BdE* 35 (Cairo, 1961), pp. 214, 218, and p. 223 (ah). For such colonnades of Dynasty XXV at Thebes, J. Leclant, *Recherches sur les monuments thébains de la XXV<sup>e</sup> dynastie dite éthiopienne*, IFAO, *BdE* XXXVI (Cairo, 1965), pp. 200-216; and, more recently D. Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York and Oxford, 1999), pp. 43-61 on Kushite Period architecture, and 282-285 on "Entrance Porches and Kiosks."

Khabekhenet, a priest under King Ramesses II <sup>3</sup>. The second is a post-Ramesside expansion of the structure, using sandstone and limestone blocks, the latter inscribed for Ramesses II. The remains of the east wall of the Porch where it abuts the pylon seem to belong to this phase. C<sub>14</sub> analysis of organic remains from the southeast corner of the structure suggests that it probably represents remains of a Dynasty 25 building that were incorporated into the third phase, which is the present Ptolemaic Porch.

Between 1996 and 1999, the Expedition excavated the southern end of the West Porch to the level of its preserved paving. By late Roman times, the area between the rows of columns at the south end of the Porch had become a dumping ground for stone debris, probably from one of the quarrying forays at the site. Among the debris in 1996, the Expedition found two displaced inscribed blocks mentioning Nesptah, the name of both the father and a son of Montuemhat. As the south end of the West Porch was explored further in 1996 and 1999, the Expedition discovered that the face of the Mut Temple's First Pylon was not solid brick, as expected, but had been cut back and contained the remains of a small sandstone chapel. The chapel had been partially dismantled at some point as the displaced blocks and the re-use of a block from the door jamb in a later construction on the same spot demonstrate. However, the lower two courses of the south wall of the chapel, discovered *in situ* (Fig.3), are inscribed for Nesptah, who is confirmed to be the son of Montuemhat by a ceiling block found nearby mentioning Nesptah's mother. Inscriptions on the *in situ* blocks and on the several displaced blocks discovered between 1996 and 2001 raise the question, to be discussed elsewhere, of whether the chapel was a *Hut-ka* ("Soul-house") of Nesptah. As the heyday of such structures in association with temples is far earlier in time than Dynasty 25 and 26, the identification as a *Hut-ka* would make the chapel an interesting example of archaizing. Built inside a porch constructed by his father for Taharqa, whose name is preserved on a Kushite column drum re-used in the West Porch, the chapel would also be an unusual counterpart to Nesptah's burial chamber at the bottom of a shaft cut down from the pillared forecourt in his father's tomb in the Asasif.<sup>4</sup>

During the 2001 season, the Expedition began work on the rest of the West Porch's colonnade, uncovering the full length of the east row of columns (Fig. 4). Pottery from among the fallen and broken columns suggests that the porch was in ruins by the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Several blocks of Kushite relief and inscription were found, one re-used in an intercolumnar wall. The most interesting discovery, however, was the front and rear portions of a large granite criosphinx inscribed for King Taharqa; it is visible in the foreground of Fig. 4. This ram, found at the north end of the West Porch, probably formed a pair with the ram found in 1979 during the clearance of the East Porch. The earlier ram, of which only the ram's head, king's head and a portion of the king's body were preserved, was dated stylistically to Dynasty 25 and probably the reign of Taharqa.<sup>5</sup> It now appears probable that in the Ptolemaic rebuilding of the Kushite porches, a criosphinx was placed at the entrance to each porch.

The 1999 season presented another surprise, this time in Temple A in the northeast corner of the site, which the expedition's William H. Peck, of the Detroit Institute of Arts, has been surveying for the past two years to prepare a new, more accurate map of the temple; a simplified version of this map appears as Fig. 5 of this article. The southeast corner of this temple's second court contains a chapel possibly

<sup>3</sup> A. Cabrol, "Une représentation de la tombe de Khâbekhenet et les dromos de Karnak-sud: nouvelles hypothèses," *Centre Franco-Égyptien d'Étude des Temples de Karnak. Cahiers de Karnak X*. 1995 (Paris, 1995), p. 62, Pl. Va-b.

<sup>4</sup> For the burial of Nesptah, see M. Nasr, "A New 26<sup>th</sup> Dynasty Sarcophagus from Thebes," *JACF* 2 (1988), p. 82.

associated with the early Dynasty 26 God's Wife of Amun, Nitocris, daughter of King Psamtik I.<sup>6</sup> Earlier maps and partially visible building remains suggested the southern half of the court might have contained additional chapels, so a simple cleaning of surface earth was begun to make mapping possible. As often happens, even limited excavations are seldom as simple as one expects. One of the two uppermost phases of construction unearthed here may represent the very poorly preserved remains of chapels of Dynasty 25 - 26. However, French Egyptologist Agnes Cabrol has recently suggested that an avenue of sphinxes built by Amunhotep III once led westward from a Dynasty 18 Temple A<sup>7</sup>. The remains of our "chapels" proved to be built atop what could be the foundations for sphinx bases that would confirm her hypothesis (Fig. 6). If so, however, the sphinx avenue may have been somewhat short-lived, as the area in which it stood, now the temple's second court, was incorporated into an enclosure for Temple A no later than the reign of Ramesses II and perhaps as early as Dynasty 18.<sup>8</sup>

Preservation and restoration have long been part of the work of the Mut Expedition. While the Expedition created additional safe, outdoor storage for large blocks of temple decoration in 1999, its main focus continued to be the site's many granodiorite statues of the goddess Sakhmet of the reign of Amunhotep III. In 1996 the Expedition reconstructed and re-erected two nearly complete but broken Sakhmet statues that it had discovered in earlier seasons; one was restored in the First Court of the Mut Temple where it had been found, the other, excavated in 1978 in the West Porch, was re-erected in the Mut Temple's main gateway at the request of local members of the SCA.

In 1999, the Expedition began a long-term project to clear the dirt that has accumulated around all the statues of Sakhmet in the Mut Temple, carry out necessary conservation work to stabilize their damaged areas and mount the statues on bases that will isolate them from further salt and water damage. The first step was to have the Expedition's conservator conduct a thorough survey of the statues, a project completed during the 1999 season. By the end of the 2001 season, the Expedition had cleared all the statues in the Mut Temple's First Court and had treated and moved onto new bases all but the statues against the court's east wall (Figs. 7 and 8). Future seasons of fieldwork will see this important work continue.

The 2001 season also witnessed the beginning of a collaboration between the Brooklyn Museum of Art (and Detoit Institute of Art) expedition and an expedition of the Department of Near Eastern Studies of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. In future seasons, the two separate expeditions will both work at the Mut Precinct, sharing information and collaborating as appropriate, especially in preservation and restoration efforts. A main focus of the Hopkins expedition will be to develop a greater understanding of the Precinct in the New Kingdom. A summary of the work carried out in 2001 is presented here; further detailed publication of the Johns Hopkins University's work will be undertaken by Dr. Betsy Bryan, the expedition's director, and the members of her team.

During 2001, the John Hopkins team worked in three areas. In the Mut Temple itself, they cleared the gateway in the west wall of the First Court, revealing its paving and the lowest course of its stone facing.

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<sup>5</sup> R. Fazzini, "A Sculpture of King Taharqa(?) in the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak", *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar I*, IFAO BdE XCVII,1 (Cairo, 1985), pp. 293-306.

<sup>6</sup> R. Fazzini, "A Monument in the Precinct of Mut with the Name of the God's Wife Nitocris I", in H. De Meulenaere *et al.*, *Artibus Aegypti. Studia in Honorem Bernardi V. Bothmer a Collegis, Amicis, Discipulis Conscripta* (Brussels, 1983), pp. 51-62.

<sup>7</sup> A. Cabrol, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-64.

<sup>8</sup> See R. Fazzini and W. Peck, *JARCE* 20 (1983), p. 66 on the remains of an earlier pylon or, more likely a wall, below what came to be Temple A's First Pylon, in front of which once stood two colossal stelae and two statues erected by Ramesses II.

Although the gate's precise date cannot be determined, from its construction it appears to be pre-Ptolemaic, while the wall in which it is set is clearly of the Roman Period.

In 1983, the Brooklyn expedition discovered a gateway inscribed for Thutmosis III set into what proved to be the west enclosure wall of the Thutmoside precinct<sup>9</sup>. In 2001 the Hopkins team completed the excavation of this gateway, revealing the west threshold and the remains of paving leading west (i.e., out of) the then Precinct.

The third area of interest to the Hopkins team is the expanse of land south of the site's sacred lake, for which there is no record of excavation ever taking place. The team began its work in a location immediately south of the lake on a line with the Mut Temple's main axis, where a 1986 magnetometer survey by the Brooklyn expedition revealed an anomaly. The excavation revealed two mud brick structures whose associated pottery dates to the late Second Intermediate Period. As very little of Second Intermediate Period Thebes is preserved, future work in this area should prove rewarding.

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<sup>9</sup> For a description of this gate and some of what the Mut Expedition has learned about the Precinct in the New Kingdom, see R. Fazzini, "Some Aspects of the Precinct of the Goddess Mut in the New Kingdom", in E. Ehrenberg (Ed.), *No Stone Unturned: Essays on the Ancient Near East and Egypt in Honor of Donald Hansen* (Winona Lake, Illinois, 2001), pp. 61-74.



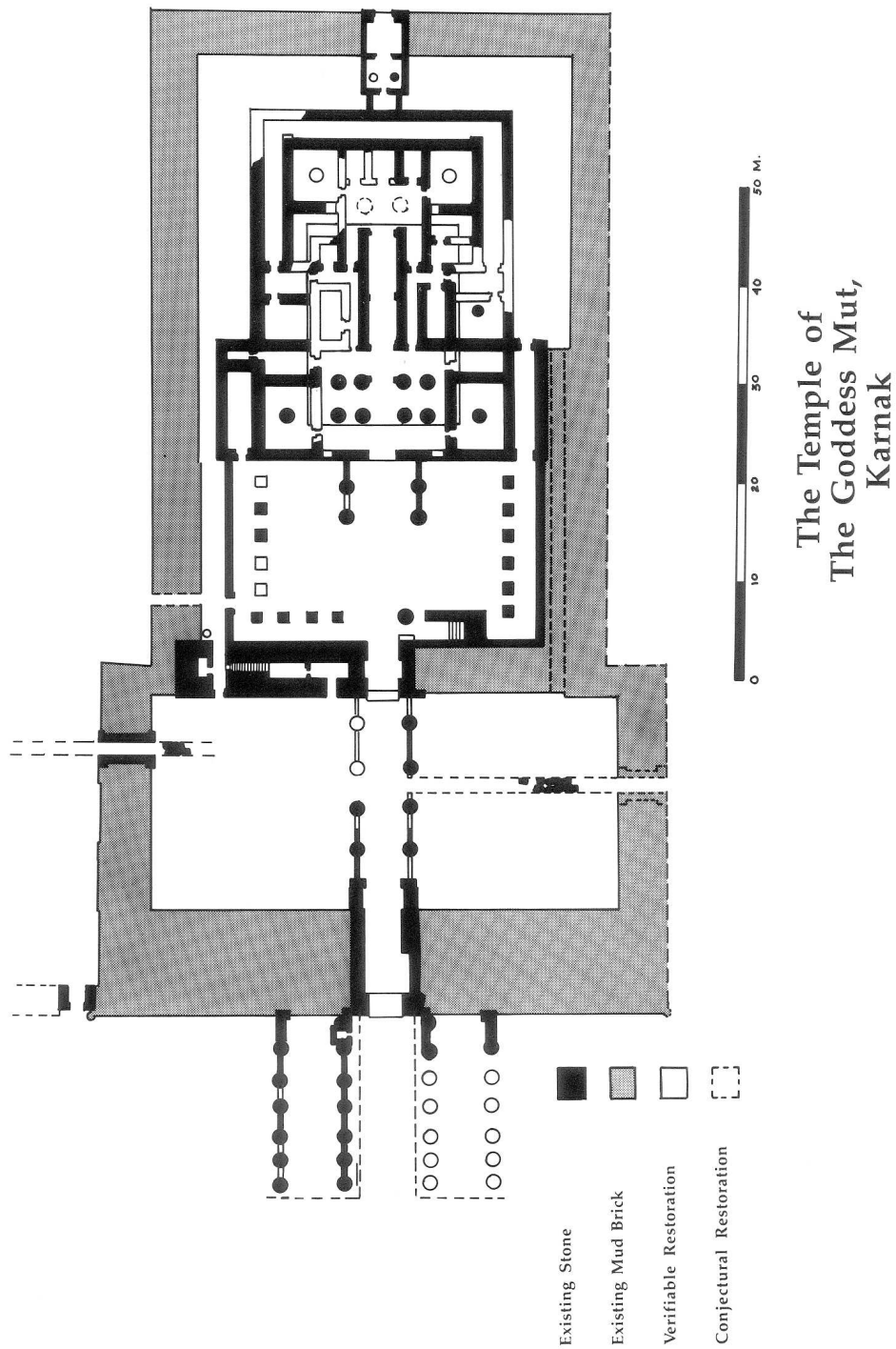


Fig. 1. Simplified plan of the Mut Temple, produced by William H. Peck for the Mut Expedition. The Porches before the First Pylon are at the left.



Fig. 2. The south end of the Mut Temple's East Porch, looking southwest. The fallen 4<sup>th</sup> column of the east row is visible in the lower right. The probable Dynasty 25 foundations are visible in the center of the picture, with the remains of the Ptolemaic Porch above them.



Fig. 3. The south end of the Mut Temple's West Porch, with the south wall of the small chapel *in situ*.

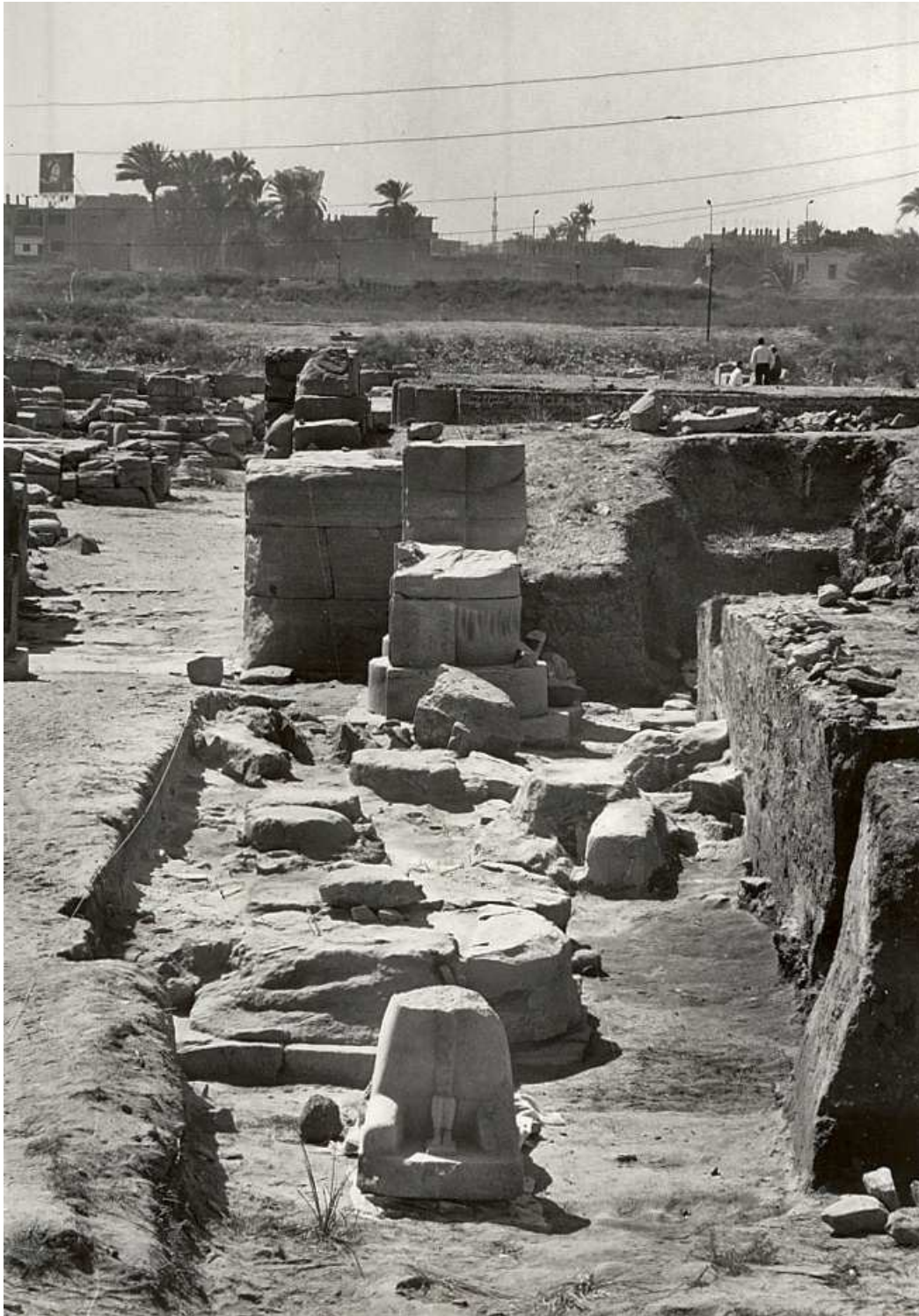


Fig 4. The West Porch of the Mut Temple at the end of the 2001 season, looking south along the remains of the eastern row of columns. The ram sphinx bearing Taharqa's cartouche is visible in the foreground

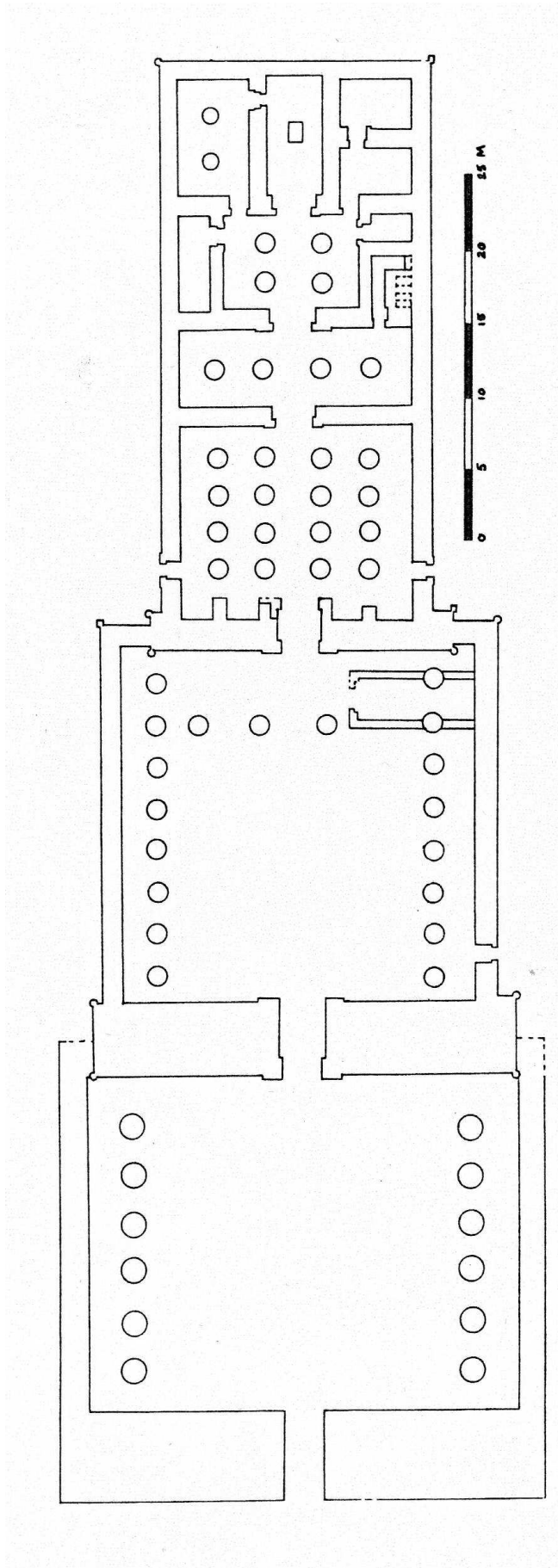


Fig. 5 Simplified plan of Temple A, produced by William H. Peck for the Mut Expedition





Fig. 6 View east of the possible Amunhotep III sphinx bases uncovered on the south side of Temple A's second court.



Fig. 7 The north side of the Mut Temple's First Court, showing the Sakhmet statues that were conserved and placed on new bases during the 1999 season.

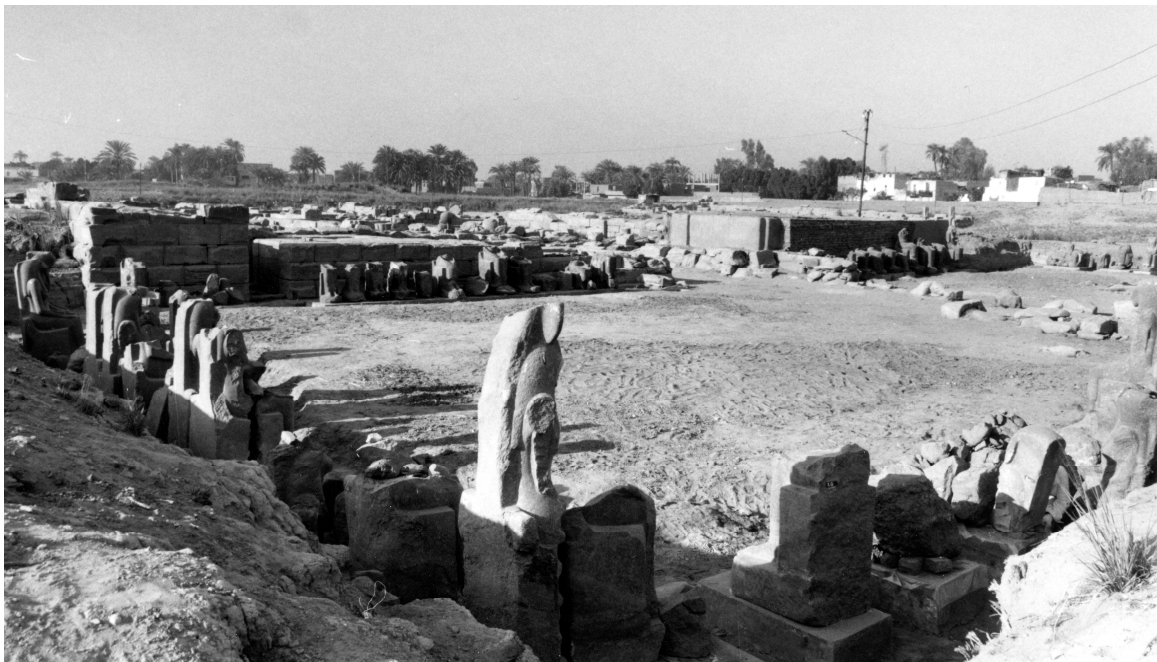


Fig. 8 A general view of the First Court of the Mut Temple at the end of the 2001 season. Most of the Sakhmet statues in this court have now been conserved and placed on new bases to isolate them from damp and salty soil.