

**Report on the Brooklyn Museum's 2005 Season of Fieldwork at
the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak**
by Richard Fazzini, Brooklyn Museum

Abstract

During the 2005 season of fieldwork the Mut Expedition excavated the small colonnade flanking the main gateway of Temple A, whose threshold was composed, at least in part, of pieces of a large granite statue of the Amarna Period. The excavation of the Mut Temple's West Porch was completed, uncovering four fragmentary Sakhmet statues, and the main processional way to the Mut Temple was also cleared, revealing the ancient paving. A stone feature in the Precinct's north enclosure wall, revealed by SCA work at the site, was found to support a vault that probably extended through the enclosure wall as part of a drainage system. The Mut Expedition also continued its program of Sakhmet statue restoration, treating and remounting the statues on the east side of the Mut Temple's First Court and in front of Temple A's second pylon.

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 Supreme Council of Antiquities¹.

Excavation

In 2005 the expedition continued its planned program to explore the front area of the Mut Precinct (fig.1), between the site's Propylon and the Mut Temple's First Pylon (fig. 2). The goal of the work is to develop a clear understanding of the history of this area so that appropriate restoration of monuments may be carried out, making the site more accessible to scholars and visitors. Excavation this year took place in three areas.

West of Temple A's First Pylon

Temple A lies in the northeast corner of the precinct, perpendicular to the Mut Temple. In earlier seasons, the expedition had partially cleared the west end of a columned porch before the temple. In 2005 the colonnade was completely excavated and was found to consist of two rows of three columns each flanking the gateway in Temple A's First Pylon. Only the bases of the columns and the lowest course of the intercolumnar walls remain (fig. 3). Although the sandstone of which the porch is built is in very poor condition, enough remains to indicate that the present porch dates at least in part to the Ptolemaic Period but that it may have existed earlier.

¹ Major funding for the 2005 season came from the Brooklyn Museum's Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund and the Museum's Friends of Ancient Egypt; Louis A. Fontana; Charles Herzer; Jack A. Josephson; Richard A. Fazzini and Mary McKercher; William and Elsie Peck; K. Putnam.

The staff for this season were Richard A. Fazzini, Egyptologist, Director and Co-Field Director; William H. Peck, Co-Field Director and Architect; Elsie H. Peck, archaeologist and artist; Mary E. McKercher, Assistant Director, archaeologist, and photographer; Jacobus van Dijk, Egyptologist and epigrapher; Herman te Velde, epigrapher and consultant on ancient Egyptian religion; Ellen J. Pearlstein, conservator. Ahmed Araby Yunes was the Inspector assigned to the expedition for the 2005 season.

The Expedition acknowledges with gratitude the cooperation and assistance of officials of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, in particular Dr. Zahi Hawass, Secretary General of the SCA; Dr. Magdy El-Ghandaour, General Director for Foreign and Egyptian Missions; Dr. Huleil Ghali, General Director for Luxor; Dr. Ibrahim Suleiman, Director for Karnak; and Ahmed Araby Yunes.

The expedition also explored the granite threshold of Temple A's main gateway, which presumably belongs to the Ramesside expansion of the temple. It proved to be constructed, in part at least, of re-used blocks from a large granite statue, of which the feet and part of the head were recovered. Based on the style of the feet and the few hieroglyphs preserved on the rear of the base, the statue can be firmly dated to the Amarna Period.² Where the statue stood originally is unknown, but Akhenaten's temple at East Karnak is a possibility.

In 2003, with the agreement of the Mut Expedition and the SCA, the Centre Franco-Egyptien des Temples de Karnak removed the two alabaster stelae that Ramesses II had erected before Temple A to Karnak's Open Air Museum. There the CFETK has re-assembled the chapel of Amunhotep II of which the stelae's alabaster slabs had originally formed part of the walls³. The northern stela bears a version of the Hittite Marriage inscription,⁴ while the southern stela, discovered by the Mut Expedition in 1979, describes the construction of a "temple of millions of years" for Ramesses II, presumably Temple A before which the stela stood. With the restoration of the Amunhotep II chapel, we were able, with the kind help of François Larché of the CFETK, to confirm that the stela's text refers to the building that Ramesses II enlarged as being in a place called Ipet.⁵

The expedition also cleared the paving that had been covered by the fallen southern stela, establishing that both the southern colossal statue and the stela rested on the same sandstone paving.

Approach to the Mut Temple: The West Porch

Between 1996 and 2001 the expedition excavated the south end of the Mut Temple's West Porch, uncovering the remains of a *hwt-k3* chapel of Nesptah, son of Montuemhat;⁶ and the east row of columns, at the north end of which a granite ram with king before it inscribed for Taharqa was found. This confirmed the stylistic attribution to Taharqa of the ram with Kushite king that the expedition found several years ago at the north end of the East.⁷

During the 2005 season the expedition excavated the remainder of the porch (fig. 3). This year's work confirmed that both the West and East Porches are composed of two rows of seven sandstone columns. Both are works of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, rebuilt and largely redecorated during the Ptolemaic Period. It has long been known that the south end of the west porch's west side includes re-used column drums inscribed for Taharqa.⁸ The expedition recovered one significant element of the porch's mostly destroyed figural decoration: a relief (once part of an

² The remains of this statue will be published by Jacobus van Dijk.

³ For the chapel, see C. Van Siclen III, *The Brooklyn Museum Archaeological Expedition to the Precinct of Mut at South Karnak. The Alabaster Shrine of King Amenhotep II* (San Antonio, 1986).

⁴ Van Siclen, *The Alabaster Shrine of King Amenhotep II*, p. 5, with notes on p. 48.

⁵ R. Fazzini and W. Peck, 'Mut Temple Expedition,' *Newsletter of the American Research Center in Egypt* 112 (1980), p. 39.

⁶ R. Fazzini, 'Preliminary Report on the 1996-2001 Seasons of Fieldwork at the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak', *ASAE* forthcoming.

⁷ R. Fazzini, 'A Sculpture of King Taharqa (?) in the Precinct of the Goddess Mut at South Karnak,' *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar I*, BdÉ XCVII, 1 (Cairo, 1985), pp. 293-306.

⁸ For these column drums, see R. Fazzini and W. Peck, 'The Precinct of Mut During Dynasty XXV and Early Dynasty XXVI: A Growing Picture,' *SSEAJ* 11 (1981), p. 118. For a partial picture of them, see R. Fazzini and W. Peck, 'Excavating the Temple of Mut,' *Archaeology* 36 (1983), p. 21. A bit more of these reliefs became visible during the 2005 Season.

intercolumnar wall) of a Ptolemaic king offering to Onuris (“who brings the distant one home”), a deity appropriate to the temple of one of the goddesses identified with the Eye of Re.⁹

The first task was to remove the overburden of excavation debris from previous expeditions, including that of Benson and Gourlay in 1895-97.¹⁰ Beneath this material a thin stratum of black ash lay over the mound of earth, rising in height from north to south, that covered the remains of the northern portion of the porch. The southern columns were buried beneath about 2 meters of mud brick fallen from the Mut Temple’s First Pylon. In general, the columns at the southern end of both East and West Porches are much better preserved than the northern columns, which have largely deteriorated to sand (fig. 4). Of the east row of columns and the East Porch, only the column bases and traces of intercolumnar walls remain. In the West Porch’s west row, however, the two southernmost columns are preserved to a height of over two meters, while the fifth column was found standing to a height of 1.5 meters. Like the East Porch,¹¹ and the two stelae and at least one colossal statue before Temple A, the columns of the West Porch had fallen to the west. Since column fragments from the East Porch were found mixed with the remains of the West Porch, the presumption is that both porches, and perhaps the monuments before Temple A as well, were destroyed at the same time.

There is evidence that quarrying activity went on at the north end of the West Porch as it had in the East Porch. Immediately above the remains of the ancient surface the expedition found quantities of stone chips, large pieces of broken stone, and the remains of four Sakhmet statues (three lower halves and one torso) that had clearly been broken up where they were found. The east row of columns and the first three columns of the west row seem to have fallen directly onto the floor of the porch (see fig. 4 above). South of column 3, the situation was different.

In 2001, the Mut Expedition and the SCA in Luxor agreed that the SCA could work in the front west area of the Mut Precinct, between the Propylon and Chapel D. In clearing the area in front of the west wing of the Mut Temple’s First Pylon, west of the West Porch, the SCA uncovered part of a thin east-west wall of mud brick atop baked brick. The Mut Expedition’s work this year revealed that the wall abuts the west side of the 3rd column (counting from the north) of the West Porch’s west row and extends 7 meters to the west, where it is robbed out. It may be associated with a circular feature of brick and stone immediately to its north (fig. 5); excavation of this area will be continued in the next season. South of this wall, a thick layer of pottery in black, ashy earth runs up to the preserved top of the wall but not over it. This burnt debris extends south almost to the Mut Temple’s First Pylon and east to the west side of the Porch, but does not intrude into the Porch itself. This stratum of debris predates the destruction of the West Porch as it runs under the west row’s fallen columns. The pottery from this stratum seems to date to the late Ptolemaic-early Roman Periods.

In future seasons of work the expedition hopes to restore what little remains of both the East and West Porches.

⁹ See, e.g., E. Otto, ‘Augensagen,’ *LÄ I* (Wiesbaden, 1975), cols. 562-567; and C. Leitz *et al.*, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen I*, OLA 110 (Leuven, Paris, and Dudley, MA, 2002), p. 378 ff.

¹⁰ For these excavations, see M. Benson, J. Gourlay, and P. Newberry, *The Temple of Mut in Asher. An account of the excavation of the temple and of the religious representations and objects found therein, as illustrating the history of Egypt and the main religious ideas of the Egyptians* (London, 1899)

¹¹ Fazzini, *ASAE* forthcoming. For the East Porch, see also Fazzini and Peck, *SSEAJ* 11, fig 1, p. 118.

Approach to the Mut Temple: The Main Roadway

The main approach to the Mut Temple's First Pylon was covered with debris that had built up over the centuries, including parts of collapsed columns from the East and West Porches. As part of our work on these structures this year, we cleared 30 meters of this processional way from the Mut Temple north to a width of 4.6 meters (fig. 3). The area nearest the Precinct's main entrance was left unexcavated so that heavy equipment can be brought in and out of the Precinct in connection with future restoration without damaging the ancient paving.

The upper course of the sandstone paving, particularly north of the Mut Temple's Porches had reverted to sand, possibly due both to repeated flooding from the Sacred Lake¹² and the rising water table over the years, but the lower course of large blocks laid horizontally is quite well preserved. At the southern end, where it meets the Mut Temple's gateway, the road was in generally better condition although paving stones had broken and tipped when the Porches collapsed on them. Here there appear to have been three phases of construction (fig. 6). The lowest course of the paving (phase 1) clearly runs under the temple's granite threshold, which sits atop a clean sand foundation (phase 2). The expedition was unable to remove the granite threshold block to determine if the early paving runs up to or under the quartzite paving of the Mut Temple's gateway. The latest phase of the paving, which may date to the Ptolemaic restoration of the temple and porches, lies atop a layer of packed earth and preserves the remains of a pink cement/mortar. Unfortunately, no pottery was associated with this phase.

As would be expected, the majority of decorated and inscribed blocks found in the roadway clearance came from the southern section, from the collapse of the East Porch and the entrance to the Mut Temple. Among the debris were a cartouche of Ptolemy XII, the only definite evidence to date that he worked at the Mut Precinct¹³; and a broken face from a Hathor column that proved to join with a fragment of a Hathor capital discovered some years ago (Fig.7). This is not the only fragmentary capital of this type found in Mut's porches, of which they may be original elements.¹⁴

Northern Enclosure Wall

West of the Precinct's entrance the expedition investigated a stone feature at the inner face of this enclosure wall first revealed by the SCA's work. Their work made it clear that the entire south face of this wall is of mud brick on top of baked brick, which could relate to Roman Period brickwork elsewhere in the Precinct.¹⁵ The stonework frames a narrow opening and supports a baked brick vault that appears to be an access tunnel for a drain running through the enclosure wall into the Precinct (fig. 8), although we did not follow the vault all the way through the wall. Pottery from around the one preserved ceramic drainpipe suggests a date of the first to third centuries AD. The expedition excavated the area into which the one ceramic pipe fed and discovered that the trench for the drain cuts a mud brick wall that may be part of an earlier

¹² For flooding at Mut in 1924, see M. Pillet, 'Rapport sur les travaux de Karnak (1924-1925),' *ASAE* 25 (1925), pp. 1-3

¹³ For a suggested attribution by F. Le Saout to Ptolemy XII of reliefs and inscriptions in the Mut Temple's Second Pylon, see J.-C. Goyon, 'Inscriptions tardives du temple de Mout à Karnak,' *JARCE* XX (1983), p. 57, n. 1. For the difficulties involved in the dating of this decoration, see the introduction to this article by R. Fazzini and W. Peck on p. 49.

¹⁴ The author is grateful to W. Raymond Johnson, Director of the Epigraphic Survey of the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute for showing him similar capitals in the block yards of the Luxor Temple.

¹⁵ R. Fazzini, 'Report on the 1983 Season of Excavation at the Precinct of the Goddess Mut,' *ASAE* 70 (1984-1985), pp. 292-302, and pl. IIIa-b.

enclosure wall for the Precinct. There is evidence that Taharqa expanded the Mut Precinct to the north, incorporating the present front area of the precinct and Temple A into the precinct,¹⁶ and perhaps this is a wall constructed during his reign. The expedition plans to investigate this area further in future seasons.

Preservation and Restoration

Sakhmet Statues

In 2005 the Mut Expedition continued its Sakhmet statue restoration program at the site¹⁷, treating and re-mounting the Sakhmet statues on the east side of the Mut Temple's First Court, essentially completing this part of the project; and carrying out the same work for all of the Sakhmet statues before the Second Pylon of Temple A in the northeast corner of the precinct. The bases on which the statues have been placed are constructed of two courses of baked brick with a layer of bitumen-impregnated material between them to stop seepage of ground water. The bricks have been covered with a finishing coat of cement to create a level surface, and sheets of plastic have been placed under the statues as a last barrier against ground water and salts.

As the work of the SCA had removed most of the debris from before the west wing of the Mut Temple's first pylon, the expedition was also able this year to move several Sakhmet statues that had stood among the ram sphinxes before the pylon to more visible positions and place them on temporary bases to raise them from the earth (see fig. 5). The clearance of earth and possible restoration of the ram sphinxes protecting kings will be a priority for the Expedition in future seasons.

The expedition also restored, to the extent possible, the four fragmentary Sakhmet statues discovered this year by the Mut expedition in the remains of the West Porch. These have added several new epithets to the lengthy corpus of Sakhmet epithets.¹⁸

Restoration of a Sphinx

In the course of the removal of the two alabaster stelae from the Precinct, the CFETK uncovered the well-preserved head of a sphinx. This year the Mut Expedition was able to identify the sphinx from which the head had come and restore it to its body. The restored sphinx (fig. 3) is the easternmost of the row of sphinxes that stands east of the Precinct's entrance.

Recording of Decorated and Inscribed Blocks

The worked and decorated blocks found by the SCA in the area between the Propylon and Chapel D had been stored in and around the chapel. This year the expedition sorted these blocks by type of decoration to try to determine the structures from which they came. The work met with some success. With the help of the Ahmed Araby Yunes, the SCA inspector working

¹⁶ Fazzini and Peck, *SSEAJ* 11, p. 119; Fazzini, *ASAE* 70, pp. 305-306

¹⁷ The Brooklyn Expedition shares this program with the Johns Hopkins University Expedition to the Mut Precinct. The Brooklyn Expedition is responsible for the Sakhmet statues in the First Court of the Mut Temple and the area north of the façade of the Mut Temple.

¹⁸ For the epithets of Sakhmet in general, see J. Yoyotte, 'Une monumentale litanie de granit: les Sekhmets d'Amenophis III et la conjuration permanente de la déesse dangereuse,' *BSFE* 87-88 (1980): 39 – 54, and P. Germond, *Sekhmet et la protection du Monde*, AH 9 (Basel and Geneva, 1981), pp. 387 ff. Some of the Sakhmet epithets found in the past by the expedition have been published in R. Fazzini and W. Peck, 'The 1982 Season at Mut,' *NARCE* 120 (Winter, 1982), p. 53, fig. 4.

with the expedition this year, the team was able to identify and re-assemble much of the lower part of Chapel D's east doorjamb, which had entirely disappeared. We constructed a new foundation on which the blocks were placed in their original positions; the final restoration will take place next season.

All the relief-decorated and inscribed blocks were photographed and measured. Those that could not be re-positioned were sorted by type and placed on two mastabas that the expedition built south of Chapel D.

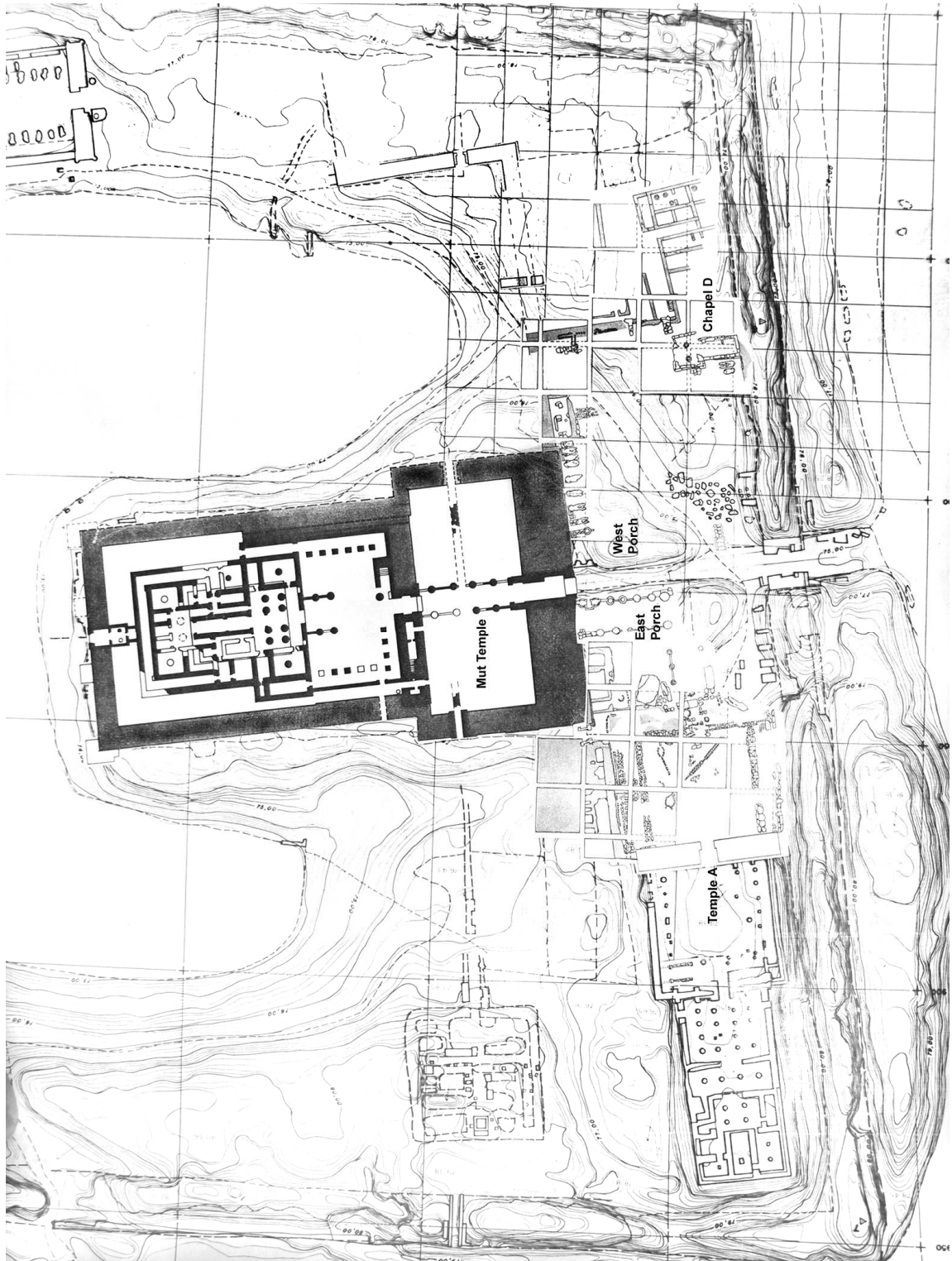


Fig. 1 Map of the northern half of the Mut Precinct



Fig. 2 The front area of the Precinct at the start of the 2005 season, looking to the southwest. The West Porch is visible in the upper right.



Fig. 3 The same area at the end of the season, after excavation of Temple A's small Porch (center), the Mut Temple's West Porch, and the processional way to the Mut Temple. The sphinx restored by the expedition is visible in the lower right.



Fig. 4 The three fallen but contiguous column drums visible in the baulk have completely decayed to sand. They appear to have collapsed directly onto the floor of the West Porch.



Fig. 5 The narrow wall running west from column 3 of the West Porch's west row, and the stone and brick feature are visible in the center of the photograph. South of the wall, columns from the south end of the porch lie atop a pottery-filled layer of burnt debris. The Sakhmet statues between the sphinxes were moved forward this year and placed on temporary bases.



Fig. 6 The granite threshold of the Mut Temple's gateway (top of the picture), with the earlier paving running under it. The later *in situ* paving is visible to the left and right, with disturbed paving blocks in the foreground.



Fig. 7 A possibly Kushite column capital.



Fig. 8 The excavation at the north enclosure wall. The stone feature and vault are in the background, with the ceramic drainpipe feeding into a channel flanked by baked brick and stone. The remains of the earlier mud brick wall are visible in the upper right of the square.