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The University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition (UAEE) began excavation of the unfinished temple of Queen Tausert in Western Thebes in 2004. Reports on the first two seasons’ work at the site were published in previous issues of *The Ostracon.* This article summarizes the third field season, conducted throughout May 2006.

The site of Tausert’s memorial temple was briefly examined by William Flinders Petrie in 1896, but our first two seasons’ work proved decisively that Petrie’s examination was far from complete and hardly thorough. Many of the areas we excavated were previously undisturbed and even areas which had apparently been probed by Petrie’s men produced large numbers of small artifacts, unknown features and valuable unrecorded information. Most telling, we discovered that the plan of the temple published by Petrie is inaccurate and does not properly record the layout of foundation trenches and surface units of the site.

In 2004–05 we excavated the areas on the north and south sides of the temple’s outer courtyard area as well as the great trench that runs across the back of the court. In our 2006 season we moved westward into the inner part of the temple area, clearing a section approximately eight meters (26 ft.) wide all the way down to the gebel (bed rock) except where some features were left for preservation or further work.

We continued to find how incorrect Petrie’s published map of the site is. Examples of this have already been given in our previous reports and another example became apparent in our current season. Our excavation unit S21/22 was recorded by Petrie as being a single surface unit but our own work revealed that it is, in fact, two separate surface areas (intended to be rooms in the finished temple) divided by a foundation trench. The nearby surface unit S20 was also found to be much shorter than as mapped (or guessed) by Petrie.

Only a few sections of the trenches we cleared in the 2006 season had been previously disturbed, and even these areas of mixed sand and dirt—doubtless where Petrie’s men had probed—still produced numerous small artifacts. For example, we found hundreds of beads and other small items including a small faience plaque with the throne name of Tausert, *Sitre-Meritamun,* in a single, previously disturbed, two-meter excavation unit (TA14:16).

We have found so many small artifacts in our work at this site that for the 2006 season we requested permission to have specialist team members study our pottery and small finds already in storage. Rexine Hummel (ceramicist) and Lyla Pinch-Brock (archaeologist and artist) studied, recorded and illustrated as many of the finds as possible from our previous and current seasons. The ceramicist concluded that we have a predominance of Nile silt wares tempered by weathered or decomposing limestone. The typical marl sherds have a pink “fabric” classified as Marl A2 in the Vienna system. Other wares, including some imported vessels, are also present and will be discussed in the final site report.

The ceramic corpus has some interesting forms. Shallow plates with a wide red inner rim are abundant, as well as a wide variety of jars painted with blue, red and black bands on a cream background. *Nu* type offering jars found in association with foundation deposit pits have been mentioned in earlier reports. Fragments of one very large biconical jar which could be partially reconstructed exhibit a vibrantly colored floral motif reminiscent of the Blue Ware of the 18th Dynasty. The remains of this elaborately decorated vessel were found near the newly discovered foundation inscription discussed below and may possibly represent a vessel utilized in the temple’s foundation rituals.

Most importantly, our ceramicist stressed that well-dated ceramic assemblages of the late New Kingdom are very few in number, and the corpus from our own site is particularly valuable as it is from a sealed (foundation sand stratum) level which can be dated precisely by the foundation inscription. For this reason, every diagnostic sherd from the foundation sand level was recorded, drawn and described with special attention to its type and decoration.
The body sherds found with the diagnostic pieces were also sorted into silt, marl, and foreign wares, then counted and described.

A number of mud bricks with stamped cartouche impressions were also found in our third season and, while many of the impressions were partly or wholly illegible, some provided valuable information. Some bricks bear the throne name of Tausert, while others appear to have the cartouches of Merenptah and Tuthmosis IV. This seems to indicate that building materials from these earlier royal memorial temples (which are located to the immediate south and north, respectively, of our site) were used in the construction of Tausert’s monument.

Other clues regarding the history of the site’s development also emerged as the season progressed. In our 2005 season we discovered several relatively small patches of dekka or mud-gypsum flooring on weathered surface units on the north side of the temple courtyard, showing that construction had extended to this outer area of the temple. But in our current season, all the surface areas cleared on the north side of the temple had substantial areas of this flooring still extant, showing that the rooms of the inner area of the temple were doubtlessly fully “floored.” The fact that the inner area of the temple is better preserved than the outer area is particularly important in helping us reconstruct the temple’s history.

While the foundation trenches of the temple’s outer courtyard area had revealed only jumbled or broken remains of foundation blocks (apparently left by later rulers who had robbed most of these blocks for their own use), in our latest season’s work we began to find whole foundation blocks in situ, carefully embedded on top of the foundation sand layer in the trenches entering the inner temple area.

One of these foundation blocks in our excavation unit TA13:5 (the nearer stone in Fig. 6) revealed an important hieratic inscription on its upper surface. The text is in two rows, of which the first is clearer than the second, but the inscription clearly seems to be a regnal date formula from Tausert’s eighth year. The text was translated by Prof. Eugene Cruz-Uribe as follows:

First line:

HAt-sp 8 tpy Smw sw 24 ("regnal year eight, first month of summer, day 24")

Second line:

tA h.t (?) an wAst (?) ("the temple ‘beautiful of Thebes...")
This text is immensely important for the history of the temple, not only because it dates artifacts and the site’s ceramic corpus quite precisely, but also because of what it suggests about the queen’s reign as pharaoh. A temple for King Siptah had been constructed during the queen’s regency and it is somewhat unlikely that Tausert would have waited two years into her independent reign to begin work on her own temple. Having already ruled, to some extent, as Siptah’s regent for six years the queen had plenty of time to plan her monuments. The inscription suggests that Tausert could possibly have begun a small mud-brick temple at the rear of the site early in her independent reign and then gone on to have foundations laid for a more extensive, stone-built structure later in her reign. In any event, the date of the inscription is close to the end of the queen’s reign, which might also suggest that the dynastic change that replaced her may have occurred swiftly and perhaps even unexpectedly. These conjectures may be given more life as the inner part of the site is excavated, but for now this text is an important piece of new evidence for Tausert’s temple.

While many mysteries remain regarding the life and reign of Tausert, excavation of her temple is producing puzzles of an architectural nature. Throughout the foundation trenches that we have excavated at the temple site, we have found small mud brick (in some cases mud brick and stone) walls spanning the trenches. These walls are of two distinct types, which we have called “Type A” and “Type B.” Type A walls are built up from the gebel at the base of the trenches and rise only as far as the layer of sand that was placed in the trenches to receive the foundation blocks, whereas Type B walls sit on top of the sand and typically rise part way toward the top of the trenches. Type B walls seem to be associated with foundation deposit pits as they are always found near them, but the purpose of both types of walls is not yet understood. It is possible that they were somehow utilized in stabilizing the sand in the trenches as building progressed, but walls such as these appear to be unknown in the other temples in the Theban area. Strangely, one intact wall found in unit TA11:15 during the 2006 season was built from the gebel base to the top of the foundation trench and fit neither type.

Our latest season’s work at the Tausert temple has built considerably on our previ-ous seasons in many ways. Not only have we been able to expand the area of the site that is now properly surveyed and mapped but we have recovered a great number of artifacts and a great deal of information that would otherwise have remained unknown. Our work is leading to an increased understanding of the history of the temple and, ultimately, of the little-known queen who planned and began its construction. Considering the area of the temple that still remains to be excavated, it is expected that the project will require at least another three field seasons to

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Fig. 5. Partially reconstructed biconical jar with elaborate floral decoration found in the proximity of a temple foundation text and possibly utilized in part of a foundation ritual. (Computerized illustration by L. Pinch-Brock.)

Fig. 6. Foundation blocks in situ in the inner temple’s foundation trenches. A regular building block may be seen on the rear foundation slab. (Photo: UAEE.)
COMPLETE

"CAUSE OF THE CLOSENESS OF THE ROAD THAT RUNS ALONG THE
WEST SIDE OF THE TEMPLE SITE AT THE BASE OF THE TEMPLE,
WE HAD BEEN CONCERNED THAT SOME OF THE REMAINS OF
THE TEMPLE MIGHT LIE UNDER THE EMBANKMENT OF THE ROAD. TO
INITIATE OUR WORK IN EGYPT, WE HAD TO DETERMINE IF THE
SITE WOULD BE ACCESSIBLE TO US.

THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF ANTIQUITIES PLANNED TO MOVE
THE ROAD EAST TO THE EDGE OF THE CULTIVATION, AND THE
WESTERN Most EDGE OF THE TEMPLE—AND A NUMBER OF OTHER
TEMPLES—WILL BECOME FULLY ACCESSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATION
AND RECORDING.

ENDNOTES

1. Thanks are due to the Director General and members of the
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   and 2005 Seasons,” The Ostracon 16.2 (summer 2005): 7–12; and
   “The Tausert Temple Project: An Additional Feature Discovered

3. Our field staff for the 2006 season consisted of Richard Wilkin-
   son (director), Richard Harwood (section supervisor), Damian
   Greenwell (section supervisor), Karin Kroenke (registrar and
   conservator), Rexine Hummel (ceramicist), Lyla Pinch-Brock
   (artist), Erin Nell (AutoCAD specialist), Ashleigh Goodwin
   (surveyor), Jennifer Harshman (database specialist and field
   assistant), Heather Kelly (field assistant) and Danielle Phelps
   (field assistant). Fifty-five Egyptian workmen were employed
   for the season.

4. Petrie’s work at the site of the Tausert Temple is recorded in

5. Our artifact log now has well over one thousand entries (many
   of them multiple-item) for the site. All the artifacts found
during this and previous seasons were placed in storage in the
SCA magazine on the Luxor West Bank (behind Carter House),
and the most important of these items will be documented in
our final site report.

   An Additional Feature Discovered in the 2005 Season,” The

Dr. Richard H. Wilkinson is a professor of Egyptian archaeology at
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