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CALL FOR ARTICLES
Since its inception in 2004, the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition (UAEE) Tausert Temple Project has conducted seven seasons of fieldwork at the temple of the 19th Dynasty Pharaoh-Queen Tausert in Western Thebes (Figure 1). The Expedition’s most recent season was profitable, particularly in terms of our understanding this virtually unknown site.1

Readers of our previous updates know that Tausert’s temple was examined briefly in 1896 by William Flinders Petrie who concluded that the monument was never completed.2 Since then, it has been mostly ignored. After careful study, however, the University of Arizona Egyptian Expedition discovered evidence that Petrie was mistaken. As a result, the Supreme Council of Antiquities kindly granted the UAEE permission to clean, record, plan, conserve and publish reports on the remains of this temple. Our latest season was conducted in December 2009 through the beginning of January 2010.

CLEARING THE TEMPLE SITE

A great deal of debris covered the remains of the temple, which made clearing the site a highly work-intensive project that required a large crew of workmen. We employed over seventy men for our latest season, but even with this crew, the work was considerable. Figure 2 shows an average surface unit (S30) in the course of clearing. It provides an example of the debris depth above the ancient surface which, in many cases, ranges from two to three meters—a figure that only hints at the many thousands of cubic meters of debris that need to be removed as each section of the temple is cleared.

By clearing these two areas, it will allow us to close in on the central portion of the inner temple, which will be the focus of our final field season.
Clearing both areas proved to be profitable, although for different reasons. While the southern area had few remaining artifacts, clearing it enabled us not only to uncover and draw a section of the temple plan properly that was mapped incorrectly by Petrie, but to establish the SW corner of the temple, also. As was the outcome of our previous seasons, the northern area produced more artifacts and small finds. This shows that Petrie only probed in one small portion of the northern area during his brief examination of the site.

The area of the temple’s SW corner cleaned this season was cleared with great difficulty. This area was covered with an exceptional amount of debris that consisted mainly of chippings from a nearby tomb now hidden under the road embankment, along with debris thrown up by Petrie’s men who searched part of the area looking for the foundation deposit pit that they expected to find.
We located the emptied pit but, as a result of Petrie’s search for it, the area produced few artifacts. We did, however, discover a number of mud bricks with royal seals (including a number with clear cartouches of Thutmose IV, plus one of the few we have found with Tausert’s cartouche) along with a fragment of carved limestone with part of Tausert’s name (Fig. 4). If this fragment was originally part of a royal name plaque, it came undoubtedly from the foundation pit emptied during Petrie’s time. The significance of this SW area of the temple site will be discussed later in the context of the temple’s plan.

During the 2008–09 season, we cleared several of the trenches in the NW quadrant area, along with a good part of surface area S41. In 2009–10, we completed clearing much of the remaining part of S41 that did not lie under the road embankment to the west, as well as some of the trench sections in this area. We were able to clear surface units S30 and S35, both of which lay under a great amount of heavy debris.

Surface area S30 presents a perfect example of the excavation history (or lack of) of the site as a whole. The area is of particular interest because it lies directly between the area to the east mapped incorrectly by Petrie (with its inscribed foundation blocks that he missed) and area S41 to the west with its many previously undiscovered human remains. The area was thus unlikely to have been disturbed.

In truth, S30 revealed evidence of previous work only in the debris thrown up on it by Petrie’s men from the adjacent section of foundation trench TA14 as they looked for, found and recorded a foundation deposit pit in that section of the site. This dirt and sand fill on S30 rested on top of a deep bed of cut limestone chips that were deposited there when the intrusive Third Intermediate Period tombs were cut at the very rear of this section. This bed of cut stone chips was considerably higher on the western end of S30, as that area is closer to the tomb from which they were thrown. The chips not only covered S30, but filled the upper parts of many of the surrounding trenches. This shows clearly that the area was sealed by tomb chippings that Petrie’s men chose not to clear, but topped with dirt and sand debris from the TA14 trench, instead.

This debris revealed several interesting artifacts, including the remains of two very small model amphorae that, without doubt, originated from the nearby foundation deposit pit. In addition to pieces of Third Intermediate Period pottery from the nearby tomb/s were a notable number of fragments of the shattered Blue-Ware vessel (and/or one like it) found during our 2006 season (Fig. 5). Evidently, this vessel had been smashed on the surface of area S20 in ritual ceremonies associated with the temple’s foundation (or expansion). A number of fragments of that distinctive vessel fell into the trenches adjacent to the surface area and were found there or, in this case, thrown up on S30 with the fill from the trenches.
When we excavated along the northern edges of S30 during a previous season, we found large construction mud bricks averaging about 40 cm in length which appeared to be the outer edge of a room or outer wall running along the edge of this surface unit. As we cleaned S30 this season, we found the clear evidence of walls built of these large bricks, but they were broken down, were only four or five courses tall, and stood in a few areas only (Fig. 6). We presume that the walls on S30 were part of an original mud brick structure built by Tausert before she began to enlarge her monument using stone.

Surface area S35 was less productive in terms of artifacts. It was of great interest, nevertheless, for it was quite different in shape and area than Petrie’s plan of it. In addition, it was sealed under a substantial amount of tomb chippings which proved that it was never excavated. Not only does the area have the remaining sections of walls identical to the type on S30, but also the most complete and perfectly-preserved dekka floor that we have found to date. This mud-gypsum floor surface is about 3–4 cm deep with a high concentration of gypsum in its construction. Every surface unit that we excavated on this site that was not completely exposed and weathered away had one or more patches of remaining flooring. This area shows the quality of the flooring surface applied originally (seen in the lower level of Fig. 7). It is puzzling to us, however, that on both this surface and S30 nearby, the dekka floor lay beneath layers of clean sand some 20–30 cm deep, topped with flat sandstone chips and supporting walls of New Kingdom mud bricks (see upper levels of Fig. 7).
If the reason for this build up was to elevate the rear section of the temple (usually the case in temple design), we must ask why was a floor surface applied so carefully to the underlying gebel before raising the area to the desired level? In addition, if the elevation was done when the temple was expanded in stone, why were mud brick walls then built at the elevated level? If the mud brick walls are from a later date and these New Kingdom bricks were used for some other purpose, why was the perfectly-preserved original flooring not used? In fact, the state of the flooring indicates that the area saw little use and was not built up at a later date. The situation is complicated further because we found New Kingdom mud bricks sitting directly on the gebel surface at a lower level in the SW corner of the site (c. 35 cm measured by EDM). This suggests that the northern areas were not elevated in order to raise the rear of the temple. Hopefully, our next season will solve this complex series of questions by the discovery of dateable artifacts.

As noted previously, surface area S41 was cleaned as much as possible by clearing the area up to and into the base of the road embankment that covers the area’s western edge. Finds from this area consisted mainly of small items like coffin fragments from burial assemblages and human remains. The remains were mummies removed from Third Intermediate Period tombs; their bodies were broken up when the tombs were robbed in antiquity. Petrie duly noted their presence in the gebel under the embankment, also.

The size of the remains found this season ranged from small bones to the left side of one mummy’s face and neck. This is a striking example that shows the brutal way in which mummies were ravaged by robbers seeking amulets of funerary jewelry. The osteological material is extensive; our log of the human remains shows a number of individuals present of different ages (based on numerous bone duplications, along with bone sizes, epiphysial fusion and vertebral wear, etc.).

Dr. Gonzalo Sanchez was the medical expert who examined these remains in detail to extract what information exists with regard to the number, age, sex, and health of the individuals (Fig. 8). He was able to determine that we have at least eight individuals in this one area: seven adults and one juvenile (four males, three females, and one indeterminate). His preliminary conclusions concerning the human remains were appended to our formal report.

We were pleased to welcome to our team this year Professor Ahmed Fahmy, Archaeobotanist at Helwan University. Professor Fahmy worked with us to analyze the phytolithic and other plant remains from cores taken from the site, as well as the samples taken from the sealed floors that we uncovered (Fig. 9).
We hope that the analysis will provide evidence of the temple’s use (for plant offerings, etc.). The results of this analysis will also be included in our final report for the site. In addition, Professor Fahmy identified conclusively that the ancient leaves found placed over the offering in the offering pit we discovered in 2007 were *Mimusops laurifolia*—the Persea. While we suspected this, it was gratifying to have this confirmed by an authority.

All artifacts found in the course of the 2009–10 season were catalogued and placed in storage in the SCA magazine behind the Carter House on Luxor’s West Bank. The most important items will be documented in our final report.

**PRODUCING OF A PLAN OF THE TEMPLE**

One of the most important aspects of this season’s work was our discovery of the SW corner of the temple located at the base of the road embankment, along with remains of the mud brick foundation pit uncovered by Petrie’s men that was located in that area (Fig. 10). We looked for this elusive corner last season. Now located, we are able to measure the length of the temple to the front pylon, which is a distance of a little over 70 meters. The width of the pylon can be discerned by scaling Petrie’s plan to ours (13.74 meters), giving the temple a total length of some 84 meters.

Of significance is the fact that on both sides of the site, all the surface areas of the temple that we cleared this season had mud brick walls that date apparently from the New Kingdom. These were probably part of the original mud brick temple constructed for Tausert before she extended the temple and began to build in stone. This fact corrects Petrie’s report, which indicated only a small section of mud brick building.

Fig. 8. Assisted by Christopher Schafer, Dr. Gonzalo Sanchez examines and records the partial remains of a mummified face that we uncovered.

Fig. 9. Professor Ahmed Fahmy (left) takes samples from a sealed New Kingdom flooring level for archaeobotanical analysis.
Every season we work on the Tausert site we find and map areas which are considerably different from those drawn on Petrie’s map. Apparently, Petrie’s details were often the result of simple guesswork made by observing the debris mounds covering the site, rather than the result of careful excavation. In our current season, we corrected areas of Petrie’s plan on both the northern and southern sides of the temple. Most notable is in the SW corner, where we found that an area he mapped as two equally-sized areas actually consists of one long and one short room. In another instance, Petrie mapped an area as a single surface that is, in fact, two separate rooms. These corrections are of particular importance, for they bring Tausert’s temple plan into an even closer alignment with the interior of Ramesses II’s monument than previously believed. These corrections provide further confirmation that Tausert patterned her temple almost exactly on that of her illustrious ancestor, a fact which has been obscured by Petrie’s inaccurate plan.

A comparison of our own temple map (shown in blue line) overlaying Petrie’s (shown in red line) makes clear the substantial degree to which we have corrected his plan (Fig. 11).

Our understanding of the overall plan of Tausert’s temple was enhanced appreciably this season when we located and examined a section of brick wall outside and to the north of the temple proper (directly adjacent to our trench area TA14:22–3). This wall is at the edge of an area which, on satellite images of the site, appears to represent possible storage magazine structures. As no ancillary structures are shown on Petrie’s plan of the temple, this is the first confirmation that we have found other structures which we believe were present as part of the larger temple complex. In our next season, we plan to utilize remote sensing equipment to map these outlying structures and extend the plan of the monument to show its true size. As mentioned in previous reports, we plan to incorporate all our data for the site into a three dimensional GIS model based on the completed AutoCAD plan. One of our team members has begun the initial work for this total matrix GIS model already. The completed model will give full and immediate access to all excavation, conservation and reconstruction data. Selecting any area on the map of the temple site will show full excavation, artifact, feature, unit, and conservation details for that locus. In addition, the GIS model will incorporate textual and photographic evidence as well as statistical analysis of the site’s data. We hope to make significant advances in the preparation of this GIS model during the coming year.
PRESERVATION OF THE TEMPLE REMAINS

Because of the dismantled condition of the temple, we have found no wholly-decorated blocks or other temple remains needing conservation to date. Nevertheless, in the course of our excavation each season we continue to assess each 2-meter unit of the temple's foundation trenches and surface areas carefully in terms of their condition. Every unit we excavate is assessed as being intact, and/or in good, fair, poor, or destroyed condition (using a percentage range breakdown). Units are coded in terms of “treatment needed” and “treatment applied where necessary.”

Because we were able to stabilize and strengthen all areas of the gebel trenches needing treatment last season, very little was needed to be done in this regard this year. Because sections of the protective fence we build around the site are knocked down routinely by local people each year, and local children play on the site when we are not present, we now routinely bury trench mud brick walls after they have been photographed and mapped, exposing only the upper surfaces of the topmost course to show where the walls are located. The fragmentary remains of superstructure surface walls that we are finding are more difficult to preserve, but we plan to cover these after they are recorded each season to protect them, also.

CONCLUSIONS AND A CONFERENCE

We are pleased to report that our 2009–10 work season on the Tausert Temple Project was extremely rewarding. Although we were limited to a short excavation season, by utilizing a team of over seventy workmen we were able to: 1) clean several areas of the temple site successfully, 2) recover a number of artifacts and human remains, 3) map areas of the temple that were mapped incorrectly by Petrie more accurately and, 4) continue to enhance our understanding of the form and history of the monument, including its level of completion. Perhaps more than in any prior season, evidence is clearer that Tausert completed, or nearly completed, her temple (despite Petrie’s assertion that she had only just begun). As is the customary outcome of field archaeology, our work this season produced new questions and answered some old ones, but we hope that the new puzzles will be solved in our next season.

The timing of our latest season coincided perfectly with that of an international colloquium on Theban memorial temples organized by the Supreme Council of Antiquities: *The Temples of Millions of Years: Science and New Technologies Applied to Archaeology*. The colloquium included invited papers on new research and work on many aspects of the Theban Temples. It was a great pleasure to see our distinguished colleagues and friends from many nations. Furthermore, it was gratifying that the presentation of evidence for the completion of Tausert’s temple by our expedition was received warmly by this international group of scholars working specifically in this area of Egyptian archaeology.
NOTES

1. We would like to thank Director General Dr. Zahi Hawass and the members of the Permanent Committee of the Supreme Council of Antiquities for granting us permission to continue this project. We would like to thank Dr. Mohammad Ismael, Director of Foreign Missions also, for his kind and continued help in arranging our work in Egypt. In Luxor, the Director of Upper Egypt, Mr. Mansour Boraik encouraged us, as always, and we thank him, particularly. We thank also Mr. Mostafa Waziri, Director of West Bank Antiquities. Mr. Mohamed Hamdan, Director of the West Bank Missions Office, was very helpful, and we thank also our assigned inspectors, Mr. Ali Reda Mohammad Soliman, who was a great help in several areas, and Mr. Ahmed Hassan Iberd, who served as the inspector for our work in the magazine. Reis Omar Farouk Sayed El-Quftawi was exceptionally helpful in making arrangements for all aspects of our work and directing the workmen, and Assistant Reis Kamal Helmy and Mahmoud Mohammed Rostem were helpful in this also. It was a pleasure to work with our Egyptian colleagues and we thank them all. As before, our thanks are also due to the American Research Center in Egypt which facilitated our Expedition, and most especially to Amira Khattab and Jane Smythe, whose kind and able help we appreciate greatly. Our project staff for this season consisted of Dr. Richard Wilkinson (director), Richard Harwood (associate director for photography and section leader), Damian Greenwell (assistant director for excavation and section leader), Danielle Phelps (object registrar), Aaryn Brewer (AutoCAD and mapping specialist), Linda Regan Gosner (senior excavation assistant and section leader), Dr. Gonzalo Sanchez (medical consultant), Dr. Ahmed Fahmy (archaeobotanist), Christopher Schafer (photographer), and Mark Wilkinson (excavation assistant). We employed some seventy Egyptian workmen during the season as well as drivers and boatmen.


3. Throughout this article “north” and other cardinal points are based on local north, as utilized by the ancient Egyptians. Local north on the Tausert site lies at 40 degrees east of magnetic north. The numeration employed in our designation of trench and surface units in the Tausert site is documented in our reports and publications, but may be explained here briefly as follows: The temple’s foundation trenches were assigned designations TA1–14 for east-west trenches and TB1–18 for south-north trenches usually with 2-meter sub units (unless circumstances dictated smaller units) in the areas cleared so far. This system makes a better analysis of artifact distribution possible than a regular grid system would allow. Surface units defined, studied, or cleaned so far are designated S1–S47.

About the author:

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