



bulletin

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Response to Disaster: USAID and ARCE Assist in Repairs

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Fig. 1—Entrance of the Museum of Islamic Art after the bombing. Photo courtesy of the MoA

It sounds so depressingly familiar, another attack on an Egyptian museum building housing valuable and irreplaceable objects of historical and cultural heritage. (Fig. 1)

In the early hours of Friday morning, January 25, 2014, approx. 500 kg of TNT was detonated in front of the Cairo Security Directorate on Port Said Street resulting in the death of five people and the injury of at least 75. During the course of the day another three smaller bombs were detonated throughout Cairo, resulting in three more fatalities.

The Cairo Security Directorate is located within an area known as Bab el-Khalq, which is part of Historic Cairo, a vibrant and heavily populated area of the city that also happens to contain many buildings of great historical significance. In 1979 UNESCO included this area

on the World Heritage List recognizing its “absolutely unquestionable historical, archaeological and urbanistic importance” to Cairo and the world (Fig. 2).

Because the explosion occurred very early on a Friday morning the number of fatalities and casualties were mercifully low; however, extensive collateral damage was done to a building across the street from the Cairo Security Directorate housing one of the world’s most significant collections of Islamic art and manuscripts. This building, constructed in what is known as the Neo-Mamlouk Style, was completed and inaugurated by Khedive Abbas II Hilmi in 1904. Today, the ground floor is occupied by the Museum of Islamic Art, managed by the Ministry of Antiquities (MoA); and the upper floors house the Manuscript Library and Manuscript Museum collection of the National Library and Archives of Egypt (Dar el-Kotob, Bab el-Khalq), under the

management of the Ministry of Culture. Both institutes had undergone extensive renovations in recent years and both could boast state of the art exhibition spaces, storage, research and conservation facilities (Fig. 3).

Very soon after the bombing a group of heritage activists rushed to the site to try to assess what might have happened to the building; to help form a protective line around the site if needed to stop potential looting; and to assist where possible in the collection and purchase of any supplies required to stabilize artifacts. Thankfully the collections remained safe from looting; however, what they found was a cultural disaster. The façade of the building was very badly damaged and the resulting vacuum created by the blast contributed to vast and extensive damage to both the Museum and the Library (Fig. 4).

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear ARCE Members,

One of the great tragedies that has accompanied the political uncertainty in Egypt since 2011 is the devastating toll that the resulting instability has taken on Egypt's invaluable cultural heritage—affecting artifacts and monuments ranging in date from prehistory to the turn of the last century. Near the Cairo headquarters of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), in the early days of the Revolution, there was the break-in at the Egyptian Museum with the resulting theft and damage of some of the objects in the collection. Thanks to ARCE's Egyptian Museum Registrars Training Project, the newly created Registration Department of the Egyptian Museum was able to quickly identify each of the missing and damaged objects, assisting in the recovery and conservation of many of the artifacts.

Also near ARCE's Cairo headquarters and also in 2011, there was the fire at the Institut d'Égypte building, which broke out during one of the street clashes and resulted in the loss and damage of most of the books housed there. Thanks to ARCE's long-standing relationship with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), ARCE received a small grant that allowed us to quickly respond to that tragedy with much-needed equipment and supplies.

This January, another building, this one housing important collections of Islamic art and manuscripts, was devastated when a massive car bomb went off outside the police facility across the street. Again with the support of

USAID, ARCE has been able to lend quick and important assistance as described in the lead article of this issue of the *Bulletin*.

In addition to these tragic events at Egyptian museums and libraries, many archaeological sites have suffered, mainly from looting. The looting has varied according to the site. Fortunately, the iconic sites at Luxor have largely been spared, but other sites have not been so fortunate, as was described by Salima Ikram, Monica Hanna, and others in a recent issue of our *Bulletin* (No. 202). In this issue, Matt Adams describes the looting he has encountered at Abydos and how a grant from ARCE's Antiquities Endowment Fund enabled him to begin to assess the damage.

Throughout the shifting tide of recent events, however, ARCE has continued its work in Egypt and has helped American institutions and scholars with their projects, as several of the remaining articles describe. From conservation and documentation projects to the discovery and identification of an important Coptic tomb, ARCE's members continue to make vital contributions to the preservation and understanding of Egypt's many-layered cultural history.

Again, we thank you, our members, for your support of these important activities.

Gerry D. Scott, III
Director

IN THIS ISSUE

Response to Disaster: USAID and ARCE Assist in Repairs	Cover
Antiquities Endowment Fund Grants	
Abydos 2013: Looting Damage Assessment.....	8
CSI Abydos: Conservation & Scientific Investigation of Wood Funerary Artifacts at the Abydos Middle Cemetery	13
The Tomb of St. Shenoute at the White Monastery: Final Conservation and Documentation	21
Chicago House Photographic Archive Documentation & Digital Backup Storage Project	25
Preservation & Interpretation of the Palace of Amenhotep III at Malqata in Western Thebes	28
Influences of Egypt	
Trans-Atlantic Egypt: Egyptian Revival Architecture in Britain & America.....	34
ARCE Activities	
Amok in the Land of the Khmers: The ARCE Trip to Cambodia	41
Portland 2014: ARCE's 65th Annual Meeting	46

ANTIQUITIES ENDOWMENT FUND GRANTS

Preservation & Interpretation of the Palace of Amenhotep III at Malqata in Western Thebes

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Peter Lacovara

Fig. 1—Entrance gate of the King's Palace looking due south. Modern brick protects the highest preserved section of wall and is stepped down to indicate that the original wall continued.

The King's Palace at Malqata, built by Amenhotep III for his heb-sed celebration, is among the best preserved ancient Egyptian palace structures. As such, it is of tremendous importance to Egyptology, but also of great potential interest to the public at large. Although the site has been excavated by a number of expeditions since the 1880s, little of the

archaeological work has been published, and none of the expeditions took care to backfill or preserve what was uncovered. As a result, the palace has suffered severe deterioration from groundwater, rainwater, and physical destruction of exposed brickwork from unregulated tourist visits.



ANTIQUITIES ENDOWMENT FUND GRANTS



At the suggestion of Egyptian and American colleagues in Luxor who were alarmed about the on-going damage to the site, Emory University's Michael C. Carlos Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York applied to the MSA as the Joint Expedition to Malqata (JEM) in 2008 to identify the immediate threats to the site, and to devise and implement a plan for short- and long-term conservation, interpretation, and eventual public display of the various sections of the palace-city of Amenhotep III that make up Malqata.

This season, thanks to a grant from ARCE's Antiquities Endowment Fund (AEF), we were able to make significant progress in developing and implementing a conservation program for the mud brick of the King's Palace. We were fortunate to have Anthony Crosby join us to supervise the stabilization work. Tony has a Master's Degree in Architecture with a specialty in Historic Preservation from the University of Texas. He is a conservation architect who specializes in earthen structures and has consulted on preservation projects involving Maya architecture in El Salvador and the protection of the Atturairf Quarter of Dirriyah, Saudi Arabia. He has also undertaken



the conservation of several Spanish Missions in California. More recently, he has been the supervisory architect for the conservation of the Shunet el-Zabib, at Abydos.

At Malqata in February, under Tony's guidance, we concentrated on four main areas in and around the King's Palace: (1) the gateway into the King's Palace; (2) the main court just in front of the king's throne room; (3) the perimeter walls at the southwest corner of the site; and (4) the structure designated Ho. W. 1 which lies

Fig. 2—Main court of the King's Palace looking local north. Finished edges of the two walls in the foreground indicate the preserved entrance into the main throne room. Stepped left edge of the center left wall indicates that the wall originally continued, but is no longer preserved.

Fig. 3—Throne platform in the main throne room of the King's Palace.

ANTIQUITIES ENDOWMENT FUND GRANTS

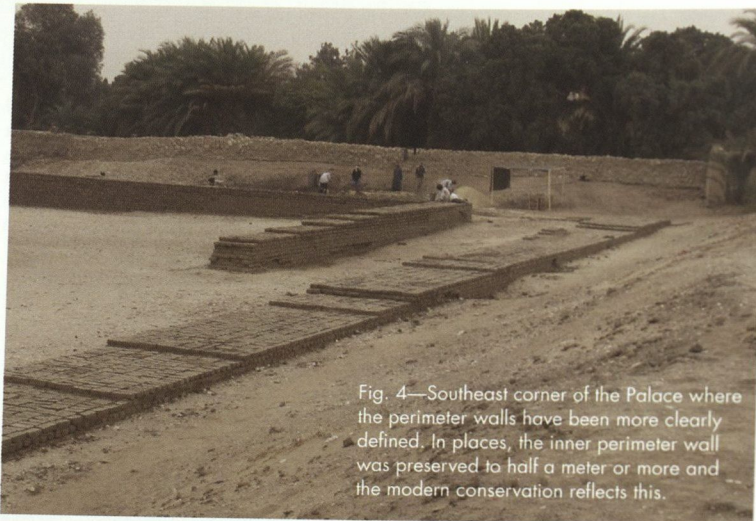


Fig. 4—Southeast corner of the Palace where the perimeter walls have been more clearly defined. In places, the inner perimeter wall was preserved to half a meter or more and the modern conservation reflects this.

immediately west of the modern roadway, but which once connected to the palace gateway. The basic approach to conservation in these areas has been to protect the ancient walls while affecting the fabric as little as possible. The existing ancient walls have been carefully cleaned and capped with new mud bricks of similar size and composition to the originals. The new bricks are stamped with the JEM logo and isolated from the ancient structure by an inert plastic fabric to ensure there is no confusion for future scholars as to where our intervention has taken place. During the current season we have protected approximately 150 linear meters of mud brick wall. In coming seasons, all the surviving ancient brickwork will be protected—covered by brick or mounded earth to prevent further erosion.



Fig. 5—Undecorated wall plaster separating from mud brick wall.

ANTIQUITIES ENDOWMENT FUND GRANTS



Fig. 6—Anthony Crosby reattaching plaster to a wall in the King's Palace.

As a result of this season's work, the gateway is clearly defined along with the adjoining enclosure walls (Fig. 1). In the main court the walls defining the west side, one of the north walls, and two sections of wall on the south side of the court were conserved (Fig. 2). In the main throne room, the throne platform was delineated with new mud bricks (Fig. 3). The southeast perimeter walls have also been more clearly defined (Fig. 4). In each case the original bonding patterns and masonry techniques were reproduced as accurately as possible. During conservation of the palace walls, areas where the original mud wall plaster is still preserved were stabilized and separating plaster was reattached to the walls (Figs. 5, 6).

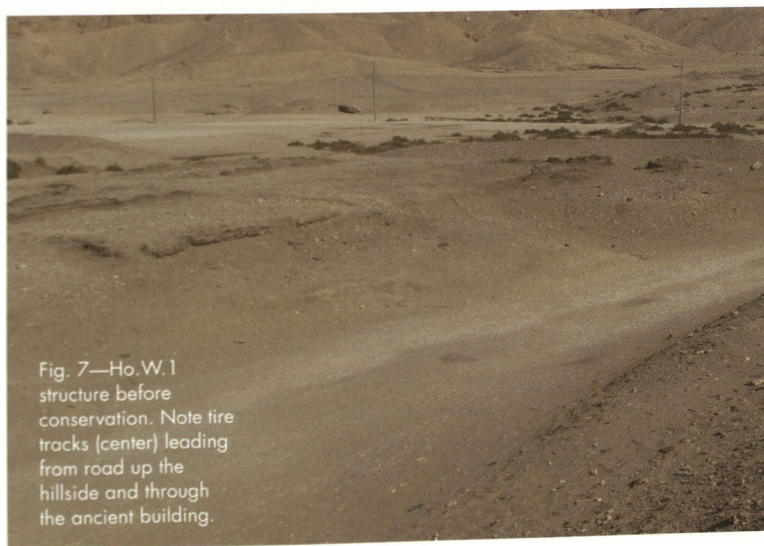


Fig. 7—Ho.W.1 structure before conservation. Note tire tracks [center] leading from road up the hillside and through the ancient building.

ANTIQUITIES ENDOWMENT FUND GRANTS

Fig. 8—Conserved walls of the Ho.W. 1 structure across the modern road from the King's Palace. The walls closest to the modern road were protected this season to signal the presence of the archaeological site.



Fig. 9—Metal fencing being strung along the northern side of the King's Palace on a line determined by the MSA.

In Ho. W. 1, four walls were conserved in an area where vehicular traffic had begun destroying the structure (Fig. 7). In this case the walls were capped and stabilized and several additional courses were added to clearly identify this area as an important component of the overall palace complex (Fig. 8).

The existing debris piles created by the earlier

expeditions will be left intact as they are now an historical feature of the site. They also provide a useful berm to protect the Palace from wind and traffic, and they are less obtrusive than any newly built structure would be. For additional security, steel fencing has been installed around the perimeter of the Palace at the request and under the direction of the MSA (Fig. 9). We also added fencing to the adjacent structure, Ho. W. 1 to prevent vehicular traffic from taking shortcuts through the ancient building (Fig. 10).

Prior to the conservation work undertaken this year, the architecture had been fully documented in photographs and in detailed plans, which will be published along with the records of the earlier archeological work. The original walls have suffered a great deal over the past century, and there are now many gaps in the walls. This season's conservation work addresses this state of affairs. In cases where there is not clear evidence of a corner or the termination of a wall, the modern brick capping has been stepped down to indicate that the ancient wall continued (Fig. 1). If there is still clear evidence of an opening, a corner, or a door, that feature is reflected in the

ANTIQUITIES ENDOWMENT FUND GRANTS

new mud brick (Fig. 2). Likewise, if there was clear evidence of an alteration to a wall, such as the later closing of a previous opening, that was clearly shown in the new brick work (Fig. 11).

In addition to conservation work, and in order to complete the plan of the King's Palace which was not fully defined by previous expeditions, we cleaned an area north of the entrance gate down to the wadi that runs through this section of the site. Here we discovered several long parallel walls that appear to have been excavated but not recorded by the earlier expeditions (Fig. 12). These may have formed service ramps to offload goods. Similar features have been found in the Great Palace at Amarna. The remains of a circular wall cut by one of these suggest the presence of granaries indicating an earlier occupation in this area that was removed for the redesign of the palace complex. We hope to further define this area in a future season.

Last season we uncovered the largest surviving wall painting along the western wall in the King's bedchamber to assess its condition and to test methods of cleaning and consolidation. A sacrificial layer of mud has been placed along the edges of the mud plaster in the most damaged section. It is hoped that this layer will prevent further detachment and loss of the mud plaster and thus preserve the wall painting. This season, Catherine Etre, our conservator, was unable to come to Egypt, but we hope to continue work on the wall plaster in the coming year. During the 2013 season, the remaining limestone and sandstone column bases were isolated from groundwater seepage and will be conserved or replicated where needed in the future season.

Next season we plan to continue conservation, and stabilization efforts in the central court of the King's Palace, in the main throne room, in the adjacent chambers off the southern side of the central court, and in Ho.W.1. Defining these areas would be the next step in a more comprehensive program that would provide further protection to the site and help visitors to understand this important monument.



Fig. 10—Metal fencing being strung to prevent vehicles from driving through the Ho.W.1 structure on the west side of the modern road.

Fig. 11—Two areas where there was evidence of previous gaps in the northern wall of the entrance gate that had been filled up in ancient times.

Fig. 12—Evidence of a ramp leading from the wadi to the northern side of the entrance gate to the King's Palace.



ARCE's Antiquities Endowment Fund was established through a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).



Everyone Bring One

ACT ON YOUR
CONCERN FOR EGYPT

Under current circumstances in Egypt, ARCE's work in the field and our outreach activities in the U.S. are more important than ever and **WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW** if this work is to continue.

The federal funding ARCE has relied on has greatly diminished in recent years and is expected to continue on this trajectory even though our work has been very well received in Egypt.

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ARCE is active on many fronts, from conservation and scholarship to training and project management—and the Egyptian Ministry of Culture views ARCE as an exceptionally successful partner.

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