

In the Desert of the Mamluks  
RESTORING THE CITY OF THE DEAD

Encircling Khufu's Temple  
NEW DISCOVERIES FROM THE OLD KINGDOM

Developments at Carter House  
REIMAGINING A HISTORIC HOME

# SCRIBE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN RESEARCH CENTER IN EGYPT

## A Foundation *for the Future*

AMBITIOUS PLANS SET OUT  
ON ARCE'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

SPRING 2023 | ISSUE 11



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A beautifully carved head of the falcon god Horus discovered in the material filling of the pillar sockets of Khufu's pyramid temple. COURTESY OF AERA AND THE MOTA.

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The capital of a column in the pronaos of the temple of Esna. In the background is a band of hieroglyphs before conservation. See page 32 for the full story.

COURTESY OF AHMED EMAM AND THE MOTA.

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The latest from ARCE's Antiquities Endowment Fund (AEF)

**Soknopaiou Nesos Project. Conservation and Presentation of Dime es-Seba (El-Fayoum) Project**

PAOLA DAVOLI (UNIVERSITY OF SALENTO)

In 2021, a three-year project for the presentation and restoration of the temple area dedicated to the god Soknopaios began, funded by ARCE's Antiquities Endowment Fund (*Scribe* 9, 2022). The work was planned and carried out in collaboration with architects Nicholas Warner and Ahmed Abdelgawad in the frame of the SCA concession to the Soknopaiou Nesos Project (SNP) of the University of Salento (Italy).

Soknopaiou Nesos had its maximum period of development from the 4th century BCE to the mid 3rd century CE. The archaeological area (660 x 350 meters) is quite well preserved and lies in a beautiful

desert environment. It became one of the most visited sites in the region thanks to new paved roads and the opening of the North Lake Qarun Protected Area.

The AEF grant aims to organize the area for visitors and to preserve its impressive temple area with enclosure walls (a temenos) in white mud bricks still standing up to 15 meters in height. They are a veritable landmark in the desert, visible from the south shore of the lake in clear days.

The second year of works were focused on building new mudbrick courses of four wall-sectors of the temenos, which were severely eroded at their bases. The natural erosion, due to winds and rain, is a local phenomenon that already affected monuments and buildings in antiquity. Several areas of the temenos and the side walls of the temple buildings were restored during the Roman period.

BELOW: New mudbrick courses in some sectors of the temenos wall.



**1 & 2** the south gate of the temple area with restored walls in mudbrick, and the team.

**3** The full team comprised almost 50 people.

**4** The staircase of the Ptolemaic temple before and after restoration



The layout of the new courses (figs. 1-2) follows the original ones and took into consideration the thickness of the sectors, which were built separately and with alternate concave or convex courses. The new bricks are separated from the original wall by a net that will allow the two masonries to be distinguished in the future. To allow the brick layers to build on solid and not eroded parts of the walls, excavation was necessary. In some cases, the trenches were very deep and allowed the discovery of new buildings, such as the lower part of the gate in the temenos. The south gate was the main entrance to the temple area, and its walls in limestone blocks disappeared in Late Antiquity, like most of the other monuments built with this material because it was reused in other places. The mudbrick jambs of the temenos flanking the stone gate were in very bad conditions and about to collapse. After the excavation and the

consolidation, it is now possible to enter the sacred area through its original gate (figs. 1-2).

The other focus of this year's consolidation was the Ptolemaic temple built in rough local stones. The restoration started from the core of the building, where the walls are most crumbling. Room F, a staircase turning around a central pillar (fig 4) and its surroundings walls were completely consolidated with the fallen stones following the same ancient technique and materials. Two flights of original steps are still in situ and well preserved. A window on the west wall has been repaired.

A guide for visitors has been printed within the framework of the project. It can be download for free at:

<http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/albstudpaper/issue/view/1904>

The works will continue in 2023.