

The Abydos Middle Cemetery Project Enters Its Fifteenth Year

University of Michigan teams, with the gracious consent of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, Egypt, have worked at Abydos for fourteen years now. As of 2008 we had conducted four survey seasons and three full-scale excavation seasons, accumulating a great deal of ceramic, skeletal, and artifactual material as study collections at the dig house.

Confronting this mass of material in a systematic way was an important component of our fourth excavation season at Abydos in February–March 2009. We not only continued our excavations and magnetometric work in the Middle Cemetery, but thanks to a grant from the Antiquities Endowment Fund of the American Research Center in Egypt, our Kelsey conservators also launched a survey of previously excavated material stored at the Pennsylvania–Yale–Institute of Fine Arts/New York University house used by a consortium of North American projects of which the U-M mission is a member (fig. 1). The survey methodology and database were jointly developed



Fig. 1. The Pennsylvania–Yale–Institute of Fine Arts/New York University expedition house compound in the desert at Abydos.

by Suzanne Davis and Claudia Chemello; this first round in the field was staffed by Claudia Chemello. Claudia was without doubt one of the busiest crew members on the ground this year: alongside her work on the database she was also continually engaged in field conservation, stabilizing fragile contexts in the Middle Cemetery including an undisturbed but badly deteriorated statue deposit (*serdab*)

and the remains of a painted chapel, both of the late Old Kingdom; and in cleaning and stabilizing smaller artifacts excavated during the season. Thanks to her tireless efforts we successfully excavated one of the earliest serdabs known from Abydos and also made great strides toward organizing the results of now eight seasons of work.

Janet Richards

Conservation at Abydos

As in previous seasons, ongoing conservation goals focused on the preservation of specific important finds excavated during the season (fig. 2). Major finds included two painted limestone walls in situ, as well as a sealed serdab deposit containing numerous painted wooden statues, along with plaster and textile elements (fig. 3).

A new and crucial goal for conservation in the 2009 field season was the implementation of a conservation condition survey of Abydos Middle Cemetery (AMC) excavated artifacts. Although important finds from the project are registered with the Supreme Council of Antiquities and transported to a central

storage facility in the local province, all other finds from this excavation are stored on site, at the dig house.

The goal of the survey is to investi-

gate artifact condition and to recommend storage improvements for artifacts that are stored at the dig house. The survey, designed and built by the author

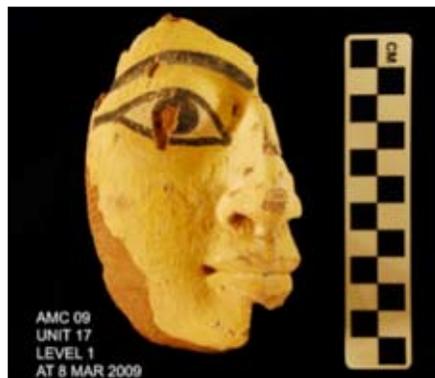


Fig. 2. Painted wood coffin fragment, after treatment (left) and packed in a custom-fitted container (right).