

The Memphis Hathor Temple: Recent Work and New Discoveries

While digging underground air-raid shelters in 1969, the Egyptian military happened upon a previously unknown temple located to the south of the main Ptah temple precinct in Memphis, Egypt. Subsequent excavation by three different Egyptian missions between 1970-1984 uncovered the top of a small limestone temple consisting of a pylon, an open forecourt and an enclosed pronaos, with (presumably) three chapels across the back. Excavations in both the forecourt and pronaos revealed *in situ* walls and columns, some of which are topped with beautifully carved Hathor capitals. The high-water table prevented all three excavators from excavating very deeply, thus only the *in situ* Hathor-headed capitals, the tops of columns, walls, and the western pylon were uncovered. Since that time, the temple has been the subject of sporadic conservation and survey work, but has not been thoroughly examined or excavated.

In 2022, a joint mission was formed between the Houston Museum of Natural Science and The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, co-directed by Dr. Michelle Marlar and Mr. Mohamed El Seaidy, followed by Mr. Sayed Shoura, to work at the Memphis Hathor temple (MHT). The mission concentrates on conservation, imaging, and documentation (photography, photogrammetry, and epigraphy) of artifacts and exposed temple architecture, and beginning last year, excavation of the later occupation phases overlying the back of the temple.

As will be detailed in my talk, our work is revealing a complicated history for the temple, which evidence indicates was built during the 18th Dynasty, re-carved at least twice (during both the 18th and 19th Dynasties), fell out of use by the Third Intermediate Period and was subsequently partially dismantled and then covered by faience and textile workshops during the Late Period. This is an ongoing project and we expect to uncover the rest of the temple in future seasons.