Peter F. Dorman

This year Peter F. Dorman, together with colleague Betsy Bryan of Johns Hopkins, co-hosted the Theban Workshop in Chicago on October 14, 2006, on the general theme “Perspectives on Ptolemaic Thebes.” Seven speakers chose topics that addressed the history, economics, social structure, priesthood, religion, and art history of ancient Thebes during the suzerainty of the Ptolemaic dynasty. In connection with this annual symposium, Dorman and Bryan also edited the first volume of the series “Occasional Proceedings of the Theban Workshop,” consisting of the papers presented in 2003 at the British Museum in London, Sacred Space and Sacred Function in Ancient Thebes (SAOC 61), which the Oriental Institute published in Spring 2007.


At the annual meeting of the American Research Center in Egypt, held in Toledo in April 2007, Dorman gave a presentation entitled “The Funerary Papyri of Hatnofer: Last of a Cursive Breed?” In addition to describing the ongoing conservation of the Hatnofer papyri in the Cairo Museum, the paper examined the physical context of the earliest attestations of Books of the Dead as found on coffins, funerary masks, and linen shrouds and suggested that the direct precursors of the “classical” funerary papyri of the Eighteenth Dynasty (in the form of cursive hieroglyphs accompanied by vignettes) were the shrouds of the early New Kingdom, on which the transition from plain hieratic had been achieved. Textual idiosyncrasies in the Hatnofer papyri likewise seem to indicate that the practice of including inscribed shrouds in burials fell into decline with the first appearance of papyrus-roll books of the dead.

The concurrent Tutankhamun and Hatshepsut exhibits in the United States gave Dorman the opportunity to lecture to various audiences in Dallas, Chicago, and Fort Worth. As part of the training program for Oriental Institute docents, he also lectured on the history of Egypt down to the beginning of the New Kingdom.

Geoff Emberling’s research this year focused on Sudan, with a field season from January to March in the Fourth Cataract region of the Nile. The team excavated a cemetery and a gold extraction site of the later Kerma period (ca. 2000–1500 B.C.) that raise questions about the internal organization of the Kerma state and the importance of the Fourth Cataract as a source of gold in many periods (see separate Nubian Expedition report). He gave a lecture on the project to the Department of Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver entitled “Political Economy in the Kingdom of Kush: Archaeological Salvage in the Fourth Cataract, Northern Sudan.” He hopes to return to Sudan in the winter of 2008 for a final season of salvage work in the Fourth Cataract.

He continued his work toward final publication of his Tell Brak excavations (1998–2004) by working on a nearly weekly basis with his co-director Helen McDonald on the stratigraphy of Area TC, the mid-third-millennium public building that appears to be a Temple Oval. He gave...