

Robert K. Ritner

Robert K. Ritner spent much of the past year preparing the final translations for his volumes on *The Libyan Anarchy: Documents from Egypt's Third Intermediate Period* and the revised and expanded *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, edited by W. K. Simpson (Yale Press). He taught six courses on topics in Coptic, Late Egyptian, Demotic, Ptolemaic hieroglyphs, and Egyptian history, and completed manuscripts for the forthcoming *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* and *The Context of Scripture*, volume 2. His article on "Innovations and Adaptations in Ancient Egyptian Medicine" appeared in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, volume 59/2.

RESEARCH

Throughout the year, Ritner lectured to a series of scholarly and popular audiences. From 23 to 27 August 1999 he attended the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies in Copenhagen, where he lectured on “Third Intermediate Period Antecedents of Demotic Legal Terminology,” demonstrating the continuity of Egyptian practice and the dependence of contemporary Aramaic documents on Demotic formulary. He also chaired the concluding panel on Lexicography and Onomastics. On the morning of 13 September 1999, he conducted a gallery and lecture tour on Egyptian magic for the Oriental Institute docents and, in the afternoon, was filmed by the Fox Family Channel regarding the supposed Curse of King Tutankhamun for a new series provisionally entitled *Exploring the Unknown*. The ultimate fate of this footage confirms one genuine victim of the Tutankhamun curse. At the popular Oriental Institute/Seven Wonders Travel symposium *Egypt Revealed*, held at the Field Museum on 23–24 October 1999, he spoke on a similar theme, offering two lectures concerning “Death on Swift Wings: The Mummy’s Curse in Ancient Egyptian Ritual and Literature.” Other participants included Zahi Hawass, Mark Lehner, and Kent Weeks.

On 26 January 2000, Ritner participated as a radio commentator regarding Ancient Egypt on the local WGN program “Extension 720” with Milt Rosenberg. From 17 February through 4 March 2000, he led an Oriental Institute tour to Egypt with thirty participants, in conjunction with Membership Coordinator Emily Napolitano and a second tour of equal size led by Archivist John Larson. After a day’s delayed departure caused by a blizzard and closed airport, the tour proved very successful, if hectic. In addition to the standard itinerary, the tour offered exceptional, private viewings of the Giza plateau, the Sphinx temple, the Cairo Museum, Edfu, and the much-publicized “Valley of the Golden Mummies” in the Bahriya Oasis. Seeing the Cairo Museum without the usual crowds was a particular privilege, and our evening visit to Edfu was the first of its kind, inaugurating the local generator for lighting (we brought a spare).

On 13 April 2000, Ritner lectured for the Dallas Museum of Art on “The One God Who Made Himself into Millions: Ancient Egyptian Conceptions of Deity, Religion, and Magic,” and on 15 April he spoke to the North Texas chapter of the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) on the historical complexities of “Egypt in the Third Intermediate Period.” On 28 April at the ARCE conference in Berkeley he discussed “A Healing Stela of Bes Pantheos in the Brooklyn Museum,” providing an art historical analysis of an unpublished magical relief. On 5 May 2000 at the Drake Hotel in Chicago, he celebrated his birthday by providing the program for the Institute’s Breasted Medallion Ceremony, “Romancing the Past 2000,” in honor of a prized friend and former student, Janet W. Helman. Entitled “The Egyptian Hours of the Night,” the multimedia presentation described the course of the sun during the hours of darkness by incorporating narration, original photography, line drawings, laser effects, and background music. With the assistance of Emily Napolitano and Aura Technologies, Inc., Ritner scripted, photographed, narrated, and edited the resulting film. Back at the Oriental Institute on 7 May, he offered an illustrated lecture on “Magical Conventions in the Egyptian Romance of Setna Khamuas” for the University’s series on “Works of the Mind.”
