Stories from the Americas and Egypt

The Fall 2015 issue opens with an article by Meg Kassabaum, Weingarten Assistant Curator of the American Section and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Penn. Dr. Kassabaum recently returned from excavating at the site of Smith Creek in Mississippi. In her first article for Expedition, Meg explores the construction and function of earthen mounds along the Mississippi River Valley. These monumental structures, many visible on the landscape today, were important ceremonial and gathering places for early Native Americans.

Our next two articles, by Josh Roberson and Leslie Anne Warden, were part of a special “Hidden Histories of Ancient Egypt” public lecture series that was organized by Dr. Roberson. He takes us on a journey into the hereafter in ancient Egypt. But instead of telling us stories about how one achieved a successful afterlife, he describes the fate that awaited the damned. Dr. Warden writes about power in Old Kingdom Egypt. Although we may assume that power was concentrated with the elite, Warden makes the case that private power coexisted with royal power.

A few years ago, we received a letter from Stuart Scott, a retired anthropology professor, asking if we would be interested in a memoir of a discovery at Tikal in 1959. “Mrs. Scaife & the Jade Mask” describes an exciting morning for a young archaeologist and a patron of the excavation, who were both present when a ceremonial Maya cache was opened.

In addition to regular departmental sections—book reviews, “Looking Back,” and news on upcoming exhibitions and events—this issue covers the first century of the Harrison Rotunda in “From the Archives.” We also include two short pieces by instructors in the Center for the Analysis of Archaeological Materials (CAAM). CAAM just completed its first year of operation and is busy preparing for the 2015–16 academic year.

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