Stories from China, Greece, the Kalahari, and Egypt

The Winter 2016 issue of Expedition opens with an article by Fangyi Cheng on the legacy of the Museum’s Mayer Collection. Isabel and William Mayer collected over 400 bronze objects from China’s northern frontier. Using archival documents and photographs as well as interviews with Mayer family descendants, Cheng provides a vivid account of Americans in China in the early 20th century in addition to a careful study of selected bronze ornaments.

Our next article, by five archaeologists who work in the Aegean, describes the recent excavation of a Bronze Age dye workshop in eastern Crete. Evidence that dyes were produced at Alatzomouri-Pefka is provided not only by the physical remains of rock-cut vats and basins, but also by the residues found in pots recovered at the site. This article is illustrated with wall paintings from Akrotiri, Thera, that demonstrate the vibrant colors used in ancient textile production.

We then move to an article by Ilisa Barbash on the early career of former Williams Director, Dr. Robert H. Dyson, Jr., who is known to most of us for his work in the Near East. When Dyson was a graduate student at Harvard, he accompanied an American family to the Kalahari Desert in search of indigenous peoples untouched by modern culture. Barbash examines a rich collection of films, photographs, diaries, and letters from the expedition in her account of Dyson’s African adventure.

Our last article, “Childbirth Magic,” is by Charlotte Rose. Ancient Egyptians used spells, amulets, and other objects to ensure survival of both mother and child during childbirth. Rose studies “bed figurines” from the Museum’s Egyptian collection that may have been connected with fertility and birth.

Included in this issue is “The New Penn Museum,” an update on changes that will take place at the Museum in the coming years. You will also find short features on the first CAAM summer program for teens and recent projects undertaken by Learning Programs. Dr. Grant Frame remembers Dr. Erle Leichty, Curator Emeritus of the Babylonian Section, who recently passed away. And Alessandro Pezzati digs deep into the Museum Archives with his story of an expedition by Henry and Frances Hall to Sierra Leone. Don’t miss the recipes for Baked Bananas and Banana Fritters recorded by Frances in her diary!

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