

Robert K. Ritner

On October 6, **Robert K. Ritner** delivered the opening lecture for the Oriental Institute Members' Lecture Series, providing an illustrated synopsis of six centuries of Egyptian history: "The Libyan Anarchy: Egypt and Nubia in the Era from Solomon to Assurbanipal." The event was followed by a book signing for his recent volume of translations from the same era; see Ritner's contribution in the 2009–2010 *Annual Report*. The following month, Ritner provided two lectures for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, on the theme "Why Mummify? Egyptian Religion, Medical Theory and the Funerary Arts" (November 19–20). These lectures, which highlighted important and unpublished Houston artifacts, announced Ritner's catalog (in preparation) of the Houston museum's Egyptian collection. Ritner returned to Texas in February to speak for the North Texas Chapter of the American Research Center in Egypt (Dallas, February 12). His lecture, "An American Mummy Tale: The Joseph Smith Papyri," detailed the tragic-comical fate of eleven mummies and several papyri originally found in Thebes in

1831, then toured and sold across America from 1833 until the final four, with their papyri, were purchased by the Mormons in 1835. One of these papyri would be “translated” by Joseph Smith as the “Book of Abraham.” Ritner’s Dallas lecture was occasioned by his in-press volume of a complete edition of the Joseph Smith papyri; see below.

In April, Ritner participated in the Chicago conference *Imagined Beginnings: The Poetics and Politics of Cosmogony, Theogony and Anthropogony in the Ancient World*, held at the Franke Institute for the Humanities. His presentation on April 9 surveyed varying cosmologies and myths of origin in “Theogonies and Cosmogonies in Egyptian Ritual.” In April and May, he delivered two Harper Lectures for the University of Chicago Alumni Association, speaking on “Ancient Egyptian Magic: Curses and Love Potions” in Oak Park, Illinois (April 28) and Evanston, Illinois (May 12).

Ritner’s publications during the academic year included numerous contributions for cross-cultural studies. For the online Oriental Institute Persepolis Fortification Tablets series, he published “Seals with Egyptian Hieroglyphic Inscriptions at Persepolis” with a companion study by Mark Garrison (<http://www.achemenet.com/document/2010.002-Garrison&Ritner.pdf>). For Richard Steiner’s volume on *Proto-Canaanite Spells in the Pyramid Texts*, Ritner served as a quoted contributor throughout the volume and provided “Foreword: An Egyptological Perspective.” Within Earl Leichty’s volume on *Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon*, Ritner served as quoted translator for amphora of Takelot III. In addition, he contributed an entry on an archaic “Throwstick” for the Oriental Institute exhibit catalog *Before the Pyramids: The Origins of Egyptian Civilization*, composed an article “Killing the Image: Killing the Essence” for the seminar *Iconoclasm and Text Destruction in the Ancient Near East and Beyond* (held opposite his April lecture for the “Cosmogony and Theogony” conference), and published online his study of Egyptian demonology: “An Eternal Curse upon the Reader of These Lines (with Apologies to M. Puig).” Ritner’s 2009 Paris lectures were published by the École Pratique des Hautes Études: “Religion de l’Égypte ancienne. Conférences de M. Robert K. Ritner, Directeur d’études invité: Une introduction à la magie dans la religion de l’Égypte antique.”

Most importantly, Ritner completed the proofreading for his next monograph, *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition (P. JS 1-4 and the Hypocephalus of Sheshonq)*, to be published by the Smith-Pettit Foundation (Salt Lake City). Including a history of the Smith mummies and papyri, comparative transliterations and translations of all the texts, chronological analysis of the documents, and discussions of the historicity of Smith’s interpretations of the papyri (including a Mesopotamian perspective offered by Christopher Woods), the volume offers unique, critical insight into a little-known episode of early American “Egyptomania.” The book should be available within the coming academic year.

When not lecturing, writing, or proofreading, Ritner served on various committees and taught five courses on Middle Egyptian hieroglyphs, hieratic, and religious texts from the Old Kingdom through the Coptic periods.