

Geoff Emberling

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

a talk on the building entitled “The Brak Oval: A Sumerian Temple in Semite Lands?” in the Interdisciplinary Archaeology Workshop at the University of Chicago.

He also continued his occasional lectures on history and culture in Iraq to military units preparing to deploy to Iraq with lectures in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Based on this work he gave a paper, “Archaeologists and the Military in Iraq: Collaboration, Compromise, or Contribution?” in a session entitled “Imperial Inspections: Archaeologists, War, and Violence” at the Society for American Archaeology conference in Austin. The relationship between archaeologists and the military in the Middle East has been problematic in many ways, not least of which is the catastrophic fact that the U.S. military did not protect the National Museum in Baghdad despite repeated warnings by McGuire Gibson and other archaeologists before the invasion. Emberling’s experience with the military suggests that we need more contact, at higher levels, to prevent such destruction of cultural property in the future.

Emberling co-taught an undergraduate core class, “The Assyrian Empire” with Seth Richardson and with the help of teaching assistants (and graduate students) Virginia Rimmer and Bike Yazicioğlu. The course got good reviews, but they do not know if this was because of the exciting intellectual collaboration between archaeologist and historian, or because of the fun he and Seth had discussing and teaching the subject.

Finally, Emberling was invited to lecture in the Ancient Near Eastern Department at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on “Models for Museums: The Collection of the Oriental Institute Museum,” which was an opportunity to present the Oriental Institute as a knowledge-based museum (rather than an object-based one), and to suggest that this is a model that has many advantages for the future. He is not sure how well this message was received in the Metropolitan Museum.
