

# The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Fall 2009 Newsletter

## ACADEMIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

◆ **Professor Susan Kahn**  
submits the following list of  
activities:

Recent and Upcoming Talks:

"Sperm, Eggs or Wombs: Where  
Do Jews Come From?" Invited  
paper at "Gender in Judaism and  
Islam Conference". University of  
Pennsylvania. March 2010

"Reproduction in Israeli life and  
Jewish Law" - Invited Paper at  
"Conference on Women in Islam  
and Judaism in the  
Mediterranean" Aix en Provence,  
France. November 2009.

"Jewish Wombs, Israeli Futures" -  
Invited Paper at "Motherhood  
and the State: Women, Surrogacy  
and (Trans) Nationalism in Israel  
and India" University of California  
at Davis, November 2009

"Judaism and Israeli  
Reproductive Practices" - Invited  
Paper at "Conference on Women  
in Islam and Judaism in the  
Mediterranean" Ca' Foscari,  
Venice. March 2009

Forthcoming Publications:

*Are Genes Jewish: Conceptual  
Ambiguities in the New Genetic  
Age in The Boundaries of Jewish  
Identity*, Susan Glenn and Naomi  
Sokoloff, eds.

University of Washington Press.  
(forthcoming).

*The Mirth of the Clinic: the  
Banality of Conception in an  
Israeli Fertility Center in  
Reproductive Technologies in  
Israel*, Dapha and Yoram  
Carmeli, eds. (Berghahn Books).  
(forthcoming)

◆ From **Professor P. Oktor  
Skjæervo**:

The first week of September, Dan  
Sheffield, Yuhon Vevaina, and I  
participated in a [conference on  
Avestan manuscriptology](#) at the  
University of Salamanca in Spain  
organized by Alberto Cantera  
and several of his students and  
colleagues in the Department of  
Classical and Indo-European  
Philology.

The town was very nice, as was  
the weather and the company.  
The head of the Department, And  
Agud, I, and one of the students  
(Miguél Ángel) were interviewed

by several newspapers and radios:

[Interview #1](#)

[Interview #2](#)

[Interview #3](#)

I stayed on for Miguél's (successful) dissertation defense and then returned via Madrid, where I stayed the night and had a chance to visit El Prado, the famous museum which contains, among other wonderful things, Hieronymus Bosch's Garden of Earthly Delights.

In June, I also participated in a well-attended conference in New York arranged by ZAGNY, the Zoroastrian Association of Greater New York: *Gatha Perceptions: From Past to Future*, where several American and European Iranists, as well as Zoroastrians presented papers on various aspects of Zoroastrianism, and there was a good turnout of the local Zoroastrian community.

Finally, in March, I was in Toronto to give the second FEZANA Khorshed Jungalwala Lecture, at the symposium *Cultural And Historical Perspective Of Zoroastrian Faith*, co-sponsored by ZSO, WZO, and FEZANA. Khorshed Jungalwala was an active presence in the Boston area for years Zoroastrian

community, but passed away recently to our great sorrow. It was a great honor for me to be invited to give this lecture. I had targeted my talk—"Zoroastrian Literature as a Part of the Cultural Heritage of Modern Zoroastrians"—at the younger generations, but it was a Sunday, and the young people were probably out playing soccer or whatever, and the sizable audience was mostly the no longer so young, more like me.

◆ From **Professor Dalia Yasharpour**:

The American Association of Teachers of Persian (AATP), The International Society for Iranian Studies, and The Association for the Study of Persianate Societies will be honoring Professor Wheeler M. Thackston for his continued invaluable contributions to Persian Studies.

Time: 8-11 pm

Date: Saturday 21st November 2009

Place: Salon G, Boston Marriott  
Copley Place  
110 Huntington Avenue  
Boston, MA 02116

Co-sponsored by:  
The Middle East Center at the  
University of Pennsylvania,  
Center for Middle

Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, The Center for Middle

Eastern Studies at Harvard University, Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture, University of California, Irvine, and the Foundation for Iranian Studies

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◆ From **Professor Peter Machinist**:

In the last academic year, 2008-2009, I was on sabbatical in England at Oxford University, with a fellowship from its Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. There I was able to finish and send off to press two long articles, dealing with Psalm 82 and the death of gods and with the German scholar, Julius Wellhausen, and his relationship to Assyriology. I also moved toward the completion of four more articles on various topics in the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamia, and make some definite progress on a book on the Biblical prophetic book of Nahum for the Hermeneia commentary series. In addition, I was invited to give a number of

lectures at universities and a seminary in Great Britain, Germany, and Italy, and, quite unexpectedly, received an honorary doctorate from the University of Zurich, in Switzerland. My wife, Alice, however, had an even busier and more accomplished year on sabbatical with me, taking a break from her position as a middle school teacher in the Dedham, Massachusetts public schools. She developed an ambitious reading program for herself, reading or re-reading all of Shakespeare, all of Thomas Hardy's prose, and almost all of Charles Dickens' novels - thus a real toast to our host country. She also began the study of the clarinet and bridge, and served as advisor and copy editor for several foreign scholars at the Oxford Hebrew and Jewish Studies Centre whose native language and academic milieu were not English. We managed as well to do some serious traveling in Britain and on the European continent. All in all, a very good and productive period away, and a stimulating time with old friends and many new ones.

## PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◆ **Brian Doak** announces the birth of his daughter, Nova Jayne Doak, born August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009.
- ◆ **Eitan Kensky** announces his marriage to Jennifer Broxmeyer, on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009. The couple resides in Cambridge.
- ◆ A daughter, Elise Melody Cooper, was born to student coordinator **Ann Cooper** and her husband Ron on June 5, 2009.
- ◆ **Jill Letteney** graduated in June from the Harvard Extension school, with her master's degree in Museum Studies.