

Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures NEWSLETTER

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The University of Texas at Austin

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Message from the Chairman

In this issue of our Newsletter, I am pleased to report on new developments in our department.

Yildiray Erdener, who has served as a Lecturer in our department since 1993, was selected to fill the Assistant-Professor position in Turkish, which was created last year. Professor Erdener is highly esteemed by colleagues and students. He is not only an outstanding language instructor but also a well-published ethnomusicologist and folklorist.

Kamran Aghaie, who initially came as a lecturer was appointed to fill the Assistant Professor position in Islamic Studies, replacing Khaled Abou El Fadl. Professor Aghaie, who received his Ph.D. from UCLA, brings with him notable expertise in modern Islamic history.

The Dean has approved a tenured Associate Professor position in Arabic Language and Linguistics. This change reflects the importance of Arabic language to our program and the abiding commitment of the College to this discipline. We hope to fill this position during the course of the 1999/2000 academic year.

During the fall semester, we have also witnessed great advances in our attempt to establish a university-wide undergraduate major in Jewish Studies, which will be based in our department. Professors in the departments of American Studies, English, Spanish and Portuguese, Linguistics, Religious Studies, Germanic Languages, History, French and Italian who bring noteworthy expertise in areas such as art, sociology, literature and Holocaust studies will participate in the program. In tandem with the work of our Hebrew-Studies faculty, this will provide the

opportunity for our students, and students from elsewhere in the United States, to obtain a comprehensive degree in Jewish Studies. Our proposal has been forwarded by the Dean and Provost to the U.T. System, and from there it will go to the Coordinating Board for final approval of the major. The Dean's office anticipates that the major will be in place by September, 2000.

I am also pleased to note the continued growth of the Islamic Studies Program, which has a broad range of course offerings with contributions being made by our departmental faculty as well as by faculty from Germanic Languages, History, Asian Studies, Anthropology, and Religious Studies. The growth of the Islamic Studies Program is illustrated by the increase in enrollment and course offerings, and by the change made in the prefix of Islamic Studies courses. Starting in fall, 2000, students will be able to have the Islamic prefix appear on their student records, thereby highlighting their Islamic Studies Major.

Two major cultural events were planned for the 1999/2000 academic

year. The symposium on *Pilgrimages to Holy Sites* was held on November 10th in the Eastwoods Room of the Texas Union. In addition to faculty from our department, scholars from the Art Department, Classics, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Germanic Studies, and History participated. Our invitation to scholars from other departments to participate in this program represents our effort to help create a broad-based community of scholars who bring expertise to issues of intellectual interest to our university faculty, students and the community at large. The second program will be held on March 8th and 9th, 2000, on Judaism and Islam: Cross currents. In addition to faculty from our department, speakers from within UT, around the United States, and from the Middle East will be participating in this event. This conference, which will focus on shared visions of these two great world religions, promises to be an event of singular importance. On behalf of our department I invite you all to set aside these dates.

Harold Liebowitz



Harold Liebowitz, opening the November 10th Symposium on *Pilgrimages to Holy Sites*

Pilgrimage to Holy Sites A Fall Symposium

On Wednesday, November 10, 1999, the department sponsored a symposium on Pilgrimages to Holy Sites. The morning session, chaired by Harold Liebowitz, featured L. Michael White, Director of Religious Studies, who spoke on "Pilgrimage and the



Michael White

Invention of the Holy Land"; Michael Hillmann, Dept. MELC, who spoke about "American Architecture, Pahlavi Politics, and Iran's Most Visited Pilgrimage Site"; Zilla Goodman, Dept. MELC, who spoke about "From Benares to Jerusalem: Motherhood and Pilgrimage in the Hindu and Jewish Traditions"; and Jonathan Wyrzten, a graduate student in Middle Eastern Stud-



Nina Berman

ies, who spoke about, "Evangelical Tourism or Pilgrimage."

Opening remarks for the afternoon session were made by Nina Berman, Department of Germanic Studies. Those giving presentations in the afternoon were Amelia Malagamba, Dept. of Art History, who spoke about "A path for healing: The Shrine for Don Pedrito Jaramillo"; Esther Raizen, Dept. MELC, who spoke about "Let Me Forget Thee, O Jerusalem: The Reluctant Pilgrim in Israeli Literature"; Akel Kahera, Dept. MELC, who spoke about "Ibn al-'Arabi's Love Letters to the Ka'bah: Reflections on the Rites of Hajj"; and Inna Shtakser, Dept. of History, who spoke about "'Fellow travelers' on a Pilgrimage to Moscow."

We are pleased to have had members of other departments participate in our symposium, and encourage further interdepartmental cooperation.

Graduate Student News

ARABIC LANGUAGE GRADUATE STUDENTS

Five graduate students are enrolled in the Arabic program this academic year. We welcome two new students: **Mindy Coakley** and **Loreto Catoira**, to the student body. **Mary McDermott** is commuting between France and the United States, completing her Master's thesis, which includes production of a short film as part of her thesis, entitled "From Text to Image." **Mark Sullivan** is writing his Ph.D. dissertation on the poetry of the Shi'ite and Khawarij sects in the Omayyad Period. **Harun Sahin** is working on his dissertation in the area of Islamic Studies. The title of Harun's thesis is "A Textual Analysis of the Concepts Laid Down in the First Verses of Qu'ranic Revelation." **Jihad Turk** is currently working on his Masters thesis. Regarding our recent graduates, **Alexa Firat** received an editor's position in New York City, while **Jeff Sacks** is pursuing a Ph.D. in Arabic literature at

Columbia University. **Shereen Abdelaaty** assumed a position in August as the Arabic-speaking recruiter for Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI), an international development consulting firm in the Washington D.C. area. She locates competitive consultants for USAID, World Bank, and Asia Development Bank to work on projects in developing countries.

HEBREW STUDIES STUDENTS

Anne McKinney-Dehnisch who is currently working on her Ph.D. on the Iron Age pottery from Tel Yin'am, was invited to teach a course in Introduction to New Testament Studies at Southwestern University in Georgetown in fall, 1999. Ms Dehnisch has co-authored two articles with Harold Liebowitz, "A Mould Made Seated Terra Cotta Cat from Khirbet, Beit Gan," published in the Israel Exploration Journal, and a forthcoming article "A Unique Worked Stone Mortar from Tel Yin'am" to be published in *Levant*. Ms. Dehnisch is frequently invited to speak at church and community groups in Central Texas.

Robin Gallaher Branch, doctoral candidate in Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, will deliver a paper entitled "Rizpah: Catalyst and Activist, An Analysis of 2 Samuel 2 and 21" at the annual joint meeting of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, and another paper at the regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, entitled "Genesis 20: A Template for Subsequent Prophets, Prophetesses and Prophecies." She will lecture in January at UT's LAMP program at the Thompson Conference Center on historical and literary aspects of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and has written articles for three Old Testament dictionaries. She teaches English at Austin Community College while she works on her dissertation, entitled, "Revealing Strengths and Weaknesses: How Narrators Portray Women in the Hebrew Bible."

Julie Hilton Danan, who is in the M.A. program, is completing a

thesis entitled "Between Earth and Heaven: Elijah the Prophet in Rabbinic Literature." Ms. Danan, who authored the *Jewish Parents' Almanac* published by Jason Aronson, serves as a consultant for the Jewish Community Center of San Antonio and serves as a student Rabbi at Congregation Beth Am in San Antonio, Texas, where she lives with her husband and children.

PERSIAN STUDIES STUDENTS

During the summer of 1999, MELC graduate student **Chad Kia** completed an M.A. thesis on Sadeq Chubak's 1966 novel *The Patient Stone*, and has begun a Ph.D. program in Comparative Literature at Columbia University. MELC Ph.D. candidate **Dylan Oehler-Stricklin**, who has recently moved to St. Louis with her husband Shawn Stricklin and their son Paul, is writing a doctoral dissertation on the poetry of Iranian modernist Forugh Farrokhzād and, after admission to candidacy, will begin research on a dissertation dealing with the poetry of the prominent Iranian modernist Nima Yushij (d. 1960). The supervisor for cited theses and dissertations is Michael Hillmann.

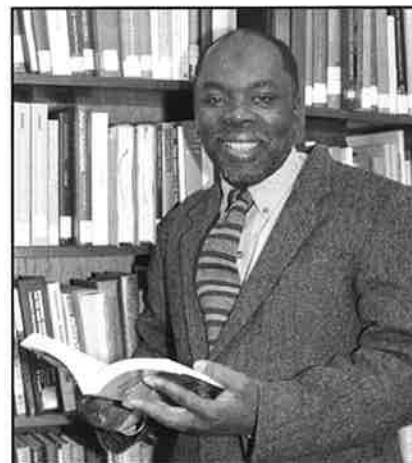
Brown Bag Luncheon Series

Robert Abzug, Professor of American Studies and History, and Director of the Plan I Honors Program, gave the first talk this fall at the Jewish Studies Brown Bag Luncheon Series on September 8. The title of his lecture was "The Holocaust and the Study of Jewish-American History."

MELC's fall, 1999, Brown Bag Luncheon talk, Michael Hillmann's "What's Up/New in My Language Teaching," took place on October 6. The talk focused on proficiency and performance features of a 500-hour Persian language syllabus which Hillmann has designed with a series of

textbooks, among them: *Reading Iran* (1999), *Persian Fiction Reader* (1998, revised edition), *Persian Newspaper Reading* (1997), and *Persian Vocabulary Acquisition* (2000, forthcoming).

Pascale Bos of the Department of Germanic Languages gave a talk for MELC's Jewish Studies Brown Bag Luncheon Series on November 10. Her topic was "Diaspora Redefined: Post-Holocaust Jewish Culture in the Netherlands and Germany."



Tracking Cultures Takes Kahera to Morocco

In summer 1999, Akel Kahera led the Tracking Cultures group of UT students to Morocco. Lectures were arranged by Moulay Ismail University for the thirteen UT students who also had a chance to visit various architectural sites at Rabat, Fez, Marakesh, and elsewhere. In preparation for the trip, the students were all enrolled in Kahera's

spring course, "The Art and Architecture of Muslim Spain and North Africa." Kahera gave two lectures in Fez. The first was at an International Symposium on Feminist Movements in North Africa. There he presented a paper entitled "Exegesis, Gender, and the Public Domain." At the second conference, *La Musique Sacrée et Rituals Sacrés à l'Heure de la Mondialization*, sponsored by American Institute of Maghreb Studies, he presented a paper entitled "The Embodiment of Acoustic Space."

International Conferences



Hassan Fathy Conference, UT

In spring 1999, Akel Kahera was the Convenor of an international conference at the University on the life and legacy of the late Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy (See *Aramco World*, July/August, 1999). The conference was sponsored by the Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, ARAMCO and the School of Architecture.

Faculty Publications and Other Creative Work

Akel Kahera: "Reading the Semiotics of a Madinah: A Discourse on the Topography of Fas," was published in *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization*: vol 4, no. 1, 1999, pp. 75-92. His book review of "Servants of Allah—African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas: Sylviane Diouf," NYU Press 1998, will appear in the *Journal of Abolition and Slavery* in spring, 2000.

Harold Liebowitz: "Two Metal Figurines from Middle Bronze II Tel Yin'am," was published in *Israel Exploration Journal* 49 (1999). These unique objects were found in the course of the university-sponsored archaeological excavations in the eastern lower Galilee which Harold Liebowitz directs.

Esther Raizen: Her computer work was advertised on NAPHNET, NAPH's listserv, and is widely used by NAPH members. Raizen added two tools to the Modern Hebrew Project. <<http://www.dla.utexas.edu/depts/cmcs/heblang/>> They are: a set of ear-training exercises, intended for practice in distinguishing between similar sounds in Hebrew, and a set of biblical chapters in Hebrew, transcription, transliteration and sound. She also added a number of audio and video interviews to the "Sound Bites" section. *Biblical Hebrew: An Analytical Introduction*, written with Lehmann and Hewitt, was published by Wings Press in August of 1999.

Yaron Shemer: In summer 1999, Shemer produced two video mini-documentaries on the Israeli dance companies of "Inbal" and "Kol Dmama." The project was funded by the Linguistics Research Center for The Modern Hebrew Project headed by Esther Raizen.

Shemer has invited filmmaker, TV producer, and the artistic director of the dance company "Inbal" to screen and discuss three of his films on Sephardi

music and dance. The event has been scheduled for the last week of March 2000.

Faegheh Shirazi-Mahajan: She has a forthcoming chapter in the book *Religious Expression in Dress: Commitment and Conversion from a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by Linda Arthur. The book will be published by Oxford University Press. The chapter is titled "Islamic Religion and Women's Dress Code."

Meet our New Assistant Professors



Kamran Aghaie specializes in modern Islamic history. The research he conducted during his graduate studies at UCLA focused on modern Iranian representations of the story of the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn at Karbala. The story of Karbala is the root metaphor from which Shi'is draw their most distinctive symbols and rituals. In this study Aghaie analyzes theological and political debates. He also stresses the importance of Shi'i rituals as a means for promoting the legitimacy of the state while at the same time allowing for the expression and promotion of social relationships and identities in

Iranian society. Last year he worked with other Islamic Studies faculty in further developing the undergraduate Islamic Studies program. His immediate future goals include contributing to the development of a graduate program in Islamic Studies. He will also give a paper in November at the Middle Eastern Studies Association Conference.

Yildiray Erdener received his Ph.D. in Folklore and Ethnomusicology from Indiana University in 1987 and is currently teaching Turkish courses. In addition to the language classes which he teaches with regularity, he has offered courses of broad cultural appeal, including courses in *Shamanism in Central Asia and Siberia*; *Musical Cultures of Turkey in Central Asia*; and *Magic, Religion and Folklore of the Middle East*. He is currently working on a book about the female-minstrel tradition in Turkey.



Research Leave

Supported by a Dean's Fellowship from the College of Liberal Arts, Michael Hillmann will take leave during the spring, 2000, semester to finish two books: a literary critical study called *Hedâyat's The Blind Owl as Narrative* and an anthology of translations called *Classics of Persian Literature, 900-2000*. Hillmann will spend the first half of the spring semester at UCLA and the second half in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. area, where he will present papers at conferences on less-commonly taught languages and Iranian Studies, and teach a Persian minicourse at the University of Baltimore.

Faculty Profiles

In each newsletter, MELC highlights the activities and accomplishments of an individual faculty member. In this issue Mohammad Ali Jazayery, Professor Emeritus, will be featured.



Professor Mohammad Ali Jazayery was born in Shushtar, Iran, in 1924. He completed his undergraduate training in Iran at the University of Tehran, where he received a B.A. in English in 1950. He came to the University of Texas on a Fulbright Fellowship, in 1951, and completed a Ph.D. in English and Education, concentrating on Linguistics, in 1958. While working on his Ph.D., he also did post-graduate work at the University of Michigan and Georgetown University.

While engaged in his graduate studies at The University of Texas, he served initially as a Teaching Assistant, later as an Instructor, and then Lecturer in English. From 1958 to 1959, he served as Associate Professor of English at the University of Tehran. From 1959 to 1962 he was at the University of Michigan, where he taught Persian, but was primarily engaged in research in Persian linguistics, in a project funded under the National Defense Education Act. From 1962 to 1965 he served as a Visiting Associate Professor of Linguistics and English, and was then promoted to Associate Professor of Linguistics, a position he kept until 1968. He was subsequently appointed as Professor of Persian in the newly estab-

lished Department of Oriental and African Languages and Literatures in 1970, where he served until 1989. He was awarded the rank of Professor Emeritus in 1990. He is currently teaching a Freshman Seminar course called Languages and Cultures.

During his distinguished career at The University of Texas, Ali, as he is lovingly called by his friends and colleagues, held numerous administrative positions. From 1966-1973 he served as the Assistant Director of the Center of Middle Eastern Studies, and as the Director of the Center from 1981-1987. He was concurrently the acting Chairman of the department in 1973, and the Chairman from 1976-1984.

He was invited to serve as a visiting professor at several different universities: John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (1957); University of Michigan (1959-1962); Princeton University (1967); New York University (1968); and Portland State University, Oregon (1972).

His research and teaching interests are sociolinguistics (primarily Iranian), and the life and movement of Ahmad Kasravi (1890-1946), Iranian scholar and social thinker.

His publications include: *The Abuses of Our Society* (in Persian), 1947; the series *Practical Psychology in Plain Language* (translated from English into Persian), vols. 1-7, 1949-50; (with Herbert H. Paper) *English for Iranians*, 1955; (also with Paper) *Writing System of Modern Persian*, 1955; *Elementary Lessons in Persian*, 1968; *Farhangestan: La Academia Irania de la Lengua*, 1979.

He has edited (with Peter Avery, Massud Fargan and Paper) *Modern Persian Reader*, vols. 1-3, 1963; (with Edgar C. Polomé and Werner Winter) *Linguistic and Literary Studies in Honor of Archibald A. Hill*, vols. 1-4, 1978-79; (with Winter) *Languages and Cultures: Studies in Honor of Edgar C. Polomé*, 1988.

His articles have appeared in Iranian, European, and American journals as well as in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, *Encyclopedia of Modern Middle East*,

Encyclopedia Iranica, and *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*. His most recent publications include: "Ahmad Kasravi" in the *Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing*., and "Farhangestan" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

On a more personal note Ali has always composed himself as a gentleman, has a quick wit, is affable, friendly, quick to greet all, and has a ready smile. His presence is always appreciated. He is dignified and treats all with dignity. He is our colleague and friend.



Faculty Workshops

Yildray Erdener attended a Multi-Language Workshop that was entitled "Teaching Language/Leaning the Web: a 'Hands-On' Approach to Authoring Websites in Hebrew and Turkish" on October 15 and 16 in Tucson, Arizona. Dr. Erika Wilson of Princeton University led the workshop and taught participants how to create and design interactive internet sites for Turkish classes. Participants also learned how to handle foreign fonts, making use of shareware, creating listening, reading and writing activities.

The workshop was sponsored by the Western Consortium of Title VI Middle Eastern Centers: University of Arizona, University of California at Berkeley, University of California at Los Angeles, University of Texas at Austin, University of Utah and University of Washington.

Persian Studies Visitor

On Thursday, September 30, in the Texas Union Board of Governors Room, Karim Khodjibaev, researcher at MRM Inj Language Research Center in Hyattsville (MD) and compiler of Dunwoody Press's in-progress *Tajik-English Dictionary*, gave a lecture co-sponsored by MELC and CMES called "Differences between Tajiki and Farsi." Mr. Khodjibaev spent the week of September 27 in Austin, advising Michael Hillmann on the latter's forthcoming *Tâjik(i) Basics Textbook and Reader*.

MELC Faculty Lectures

Esther Raizen presented a lecture entitled *Working with a Tool that is Not Yet There: Hebrew Web-based Instruction* at the International Conference of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew (NAPH), Mexico City, June 9, 1999. She also spoke about *The Triple Bond: Shifts in the Israeli Settlement Concept* at the Cities and Social Change conference at UT, Austin (June 17, 1999) and on Antoine de St. Exupéry in a talk entitled

On Baobab Trees and Growing Up Too Soon at the UT Honors Colloquium (July 24, 1999).

The Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

West Mall Building—5.120
Phone: (512) 471-1365
Fax: (512) 471-4197
<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/melc/>

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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures
Austin, Texas 78712