Message from the Chair

The spring term is always a busy time in NMC, and this year is no exception, with a plethora of lectures, symposia and workshops on the schedule. This issue reports on some of the more recent events, and highlights those forthcoming in the weeks ahead. I wish to single out in particular this year’s Savory Lecture, entitled “Echoes of the Shahnama in Mediaeval Persian Historiography”, which will be delivered by Professor Charles Melville (Cambridge University) on March 26th, and is being co-sponsored with the soon to open Aga Khan Museum. These events are an important part of NMC’s academic mission, and reflect the remarkable diversity and vibrancy of the Department’s intellectual life. I encourage everyone to participate actively in this rich program. This issue also celebrates three of our students, each of whom has been awarded one of the Department’s named scholarships in recognition of their excellent academic performances over the past year. Please be sure to congratulate them! As always, we invite your feedback and contributions for future issues of the newsletter.

18th Annual Graduate Student Symposium

Tracy Spurrier (PhD Candidate, NMC, University of Toronto and Director of NMCGSA) presenting on Neo-Assyrian royal participation in military campaigns recorded in stone reliefs.

Amanda Lanham (PhD Candidate, Harvard University) discussing the archaeological evidence on ‘Assyrianization’ at Tell Fekheriye and Carchemish, archaeological sites in Syria.
Student Awards and Scholarships

The NMC congratulates the following undergraduate awards recipients:

**Danielle Kenney** is the recipient of this year’s **R.F.G. Sweet Award**.

The Sweet Award was established by the Near Eastern Studies Students’ Association in 1994, in honor of Professor R.F.G. Sweet, former chair of the Department of Near Eastern Studies. The award is given to a student in the Specialist or Major Program in the Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, who is involved in extra-curricular activities related to the interests of the Department.

**Sharon (Shervin) Mizbani** has been awarded the **Oktay and Virginia Aksan Scholarship**.

The Oktay and Virginia Aksan Scholarship is awarded to a student enrolled in NMC’s undergraduate program and specializing in Turkish language and/or Islamic civilization.

**Meira Gold** has been awarded the **Kathleen Beatty Adamson Scholarship in Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations**.

The Kathleen Beatty Adamson Scholarship is awarded to an outstanding student in the Specialist program in Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, with a specialization in the areas of Assyriology, Ancient Syria-Palestine, or Egyptology.

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The Three Minute Thesis (3MT)

The Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) competition is a university-wide competition for doctoral students. Participants have three minutes or less to present their doctoral research to a panel of non-specialist judges.

This is a unique opportunity to communicate the innovative and significant research undertaken by graduate students like you to a wider audience. The finalist and runner-up from the University of Toronto 3MT® competition will go on to compete at the provincial final.

Preliminary heats are by divisions. Division I (Humanities), Division II (Social Sciences), Division III (Physical Sciences,) and Division IV (Life Sciences) will be held in the afternoons of March 18th, 20th, and 21st.

Register at: [http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/3MT-Registration.aspx](http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/currentstudents/Pages/3MT-Registration.aspx)
Recent Events

NMCGSA Graduate Student Symposium

On February 26-27, NMC hosted the 18th Annual Graduate Student Symposium. This year the participating graduate students explored the topic of empires from ancient to modern times across the Near, Middle, and Far East.

On the first day, the symposium started with a session on the material culture of empires, with student presentations on pilgrimage in the Vijayanagara Empire (India), infrastructure as propaganda in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, and subsistence strategies in the Hittite Empire. The late afternoon session was devoted to the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

On the second day, the morning sessions explored issues concerning Medieval and Modern intellectual history. The afternoon session focused on Egypt. In the session on ancient Egypt the speakers explored the Egyptian connections with Byblos, and also royal and non-royal ancestor worship. The following session on modern Egypt examined Maltese women evaders, Victorian Egyptology, and the origins of Egyptian spatial security techniques in the 20th century. The symposium concluded with a session on the current situation in Syria. After the presentations discussion continued at the reception hosted at NMC.

In addition to UofT students, this year the symposium attracted a record number of presenters from other universities, including Harvard University, Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, Koç University in Istanbul, McGill University, and the University of Michigan.

Archaeology Centre Research Day

On February 28, the Archaeology Centre at the UofT hosted its bi-annual “Research Day”, a one day symposium on the recent advancements in archaeological research around the globe. The presenters covered a great variety of topics and geographical regions, including metalworking in Medieval Ireland, settlement patterns in Bronze Age Crete, Iroquoian shamanism, ancient Peruvian mummies, spatial patterning of faunal remains from Arctic Canada, and the skeletal biology of Late Pleistocene and Holocene Hunter-Gatherers.

NMC was represented by Dr. Stephen Batiuk who gave a talk on the CRANE Project’s 3D Modeling Initiative, and Radovan Kabatari (PhD candidate), who spoke on faunal remains and meat consumption patterns at Late Bronze Age Kinet Höyük (Turkey).

Coptic Studies Symposium

On March 1, the University of Toronto, Canadian Society of Coptic Studies and NMC hosted the 7th Annual Coptic Studies Symposium on Coptic Heritage: Monasticism - Consistency and Change.

The speakers: front row left to right: Prof. Jitse Dijkstra, Ihab Khalil, Prof. Amir Harrak, Prof. Mark Sherridan, Dr. Ramez Boutros, Dr. Marc Malevez; back row left to right: Prof. Pablo Algârate, Dr. Helene Moussa, Sabrina Higgins, and Mélanie Houle.
Upcoming Events

Middle East History and Theory Workshop and the Institute of Islamic Studies

The University of Toronto Middle East History and Theory Workshop and the Institute of Islamic Studies present an NMC seminar with Ussama Makdisi on “Writing about Sectarianism”.

Friday, March 7, NMC Department, 4 Bancroft Avenue, Room 200 B (near Spadina Circle), 11-1 pm

Dr. Ussama Makdisi is Professor of History and Arab-American Educational Foundation Chair of Arab Studies at Rice University. He is the author of Faith Misplaced: the Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations, 1820-2001; Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East; The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon; and is co-editor of Memory and Violence in the Middle East and North Africa. Professor Makdisi is currently working on a manuscript on the origins of sectarianism in the modern Middle East.

Graduate Conference on Archaeological Sciences and the Ancient Mediterranean Environment

March 7, Opening Reception at GSU Pub Café
March 8, Conference at Anthropology Building, 19 Russell St., AP 246, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Is it possible to assemble a more lucid “history of the Mediterranean” through our current approaches to understanding the Mediterranean environment? This graduate conference will explore the role and development of archaeological sciences and collaborative scientific methodologies in deciphering the Ancient Mediterranean environment, mutually impacted by natural and human actions.

Seminar in Ottoman and Turkish Studies

The Archaeology Centre, Department of History and NMC present “Reconstructing Ritual from Archaeological Investigation: Chungul Kurgan from the Qipchaq Steppe of the Early 13th Century”, a lecture by Renata Holod (University of Pennsylvania).

Thursday, March 13, 4 Bancroft Avenue, NMC Conference Room (2008), 4:00 - 6:00 pm

The careful excavation of Chungul Kurgan has allowed for a reconstruction of burial rituals of a Qipchaq (Cuman/Polovets) noble in the steppe of the Molochna River system of southern Ukraine. The phasing of the burial ritual can be reconstructed based upon the interpretation of the archaeological record, and enhanced through ethnographic and historic parallels. Furthermore, the calculation of the energetics necessary for the reconstruction of the tumulus provides a reliable estimate of the physical effort, and social organization, necessary to raise a tumulus. Along with the very rich grave goods, the construction process and the burial rituals illuminate the material and spiritual identity of the Qipchaq nomadic confederation of the 12th and 13th centuries.
Canadian Institute for Mediterranean Studies Lecture


Thursday, March 13, Bahen Centre, 40 St. George St., Room 1130, 7:15 - 8:15 pm

Renewed salvage excavations carried out in 2012-2013 at Tel Motza by the Israel Antiquities Authority revealed the presence of a 9th century BCE temple complex. The excavations yielded clear evidence of cultic activity within the courtyard of the building, as demonstrated by the presence of an altar and a hoard of unparalleled anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines. These finds provide valuable insights into religious practices in the Jerusalem environs during the First Temple Period.

The Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies Lecture

The CSMS presents a lecture on “Persians on the Euphrates. Material Culture and Elite Identity in the Achaemenid Tombs from Hacinebi, Turkey” by Gil J. Stein (Director of the Oriental Institute, Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology, University of Chicago).

Wednesday, March 19, 5 Bancroft Avenue, Earth Sciences Auditorium B142, 8:00 pm

Two intact Persian period burials at the site of Hacinebi, near the Euphrates river-crossing at Zeugma/Apamea in southeast Turkey provide a rare opportunity to investigate the relationship between material culture styles and elite identity in the multi-ethnic Achaemenid Empire. The Hacinebi tombs are compared with burials from other parts of the Persian Empire to examine the question of whether the burial practices and grave goods reflect Persian/Iranian ethnic identity as opposed to the use of what we can call “portable elite material culture” by local non-Persian elites in the satrapies.

The CRANE Project Workshop

The Computational Research on the Ancient Near East and NMC organize a “CRANE Workshop: Ceramic Analysis, Data Integration, and Cross-Project Collaboration.”

Friday, March 21, Anthropology Building, 19 Russell St., Room 130, 9:15 am - 5:30 pm

For more information about the CRANE Project, please visit the project website: www.crane.utoronto.ca.

The Canadian Institute for Mediterranean Studies Lecture

The CIMS, Archaeology Centre, and NMC present a lecture on “Shipwrecks of Theodosius Harbour in Istanbul (Turkey)” by Dr. Ufuk Kocabaş (Director Istanbul University’s Department of Marine Archaeology and the Yenikapı Shipwrecks Project).

Monday, March 24, Trinity College, George Ignatieff Theatre, 15 Devonshire Place, 7:15 - 8:45 pm

This illustrated lecture will present on the remarkable discovery of 37 shipwrecks, part of the Theodosian Harbour of Byzantine Constantinople, during the construction of Istanbul metro.
The 2014 Kathleen and Roger Savory Lecture in Persian Studies

NMC, in collaboration with the Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, is hosting the 3rd Annual Kathleen and Roger Savory Lecture in Persian Studies on “Echoes of the Shahnama in Mediaeval Persian Historiography” by Charles Melville (University of Cambridge).

Wednesday, March 26, Muzzo Family Alumni Hall 400, St. Michael’s College, 121 St. Joseph’s St., 3 pm.

Prof. Melville is the founder of the Shahnama Project at the University of Cambridge and the author and editor of numerous studies on the history and historiography of Iran, most recently Persian Historiography, volume 10 of the “History of Persian Literature” series (I.B. Tauris, 2012). His illustrated lecture will trace the impact of the Persian epic “Book of Kings,” completed by the poet Ferdowsi in 1010 AD, on the writing of history and the self-image of rulers in the medieval Persianate Islamic world.

The Savory Lecture series was established in 2011 in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations for the purpose of holding an annual lecture by a distinguished scholar on some aspect of Persian studies in honour of Prof. Emeritus Roger Savory and his late wife, Kathleen. Professor Savory is an internationally renowned historian of the Safavid dynasty of Iran. He was also one of the pioneering faculty members in the development of Persian Studies at the University of Toronto where the teaching of Persian language, history and literature was first established in 1961.

A separate trust fund has been established for the Savory Lecture series. All donations are tax-deductible and tax receipts are issued by the University of Toronto. Cheques should be made out to “University of Toronto” (add “Savory Lectures” in the memo line) and mailed to: Business Officer, Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, University of Toronto, 4 Bancroft Ave., Toronto, ON M5S 1C1.

Announcements

NMC graduate students have created a new book club on ancient Egypt called the “Scrolls of Seshat”. The book club is named after the ancient Egyptian goddess of writing and libraries. As you may have guessed the focus is on ancient Egypt and Egyptology. The club members read one book a month on a selected topic. The group discussion is moderated by an Egyptologist who can answer any questions you may have about the reading or ancient Egypt. This club is perfect for anyone who loves ancient Egypt, be it traveler, student, avid reader or die-hard Egyptophile. Everyone is welcome.

Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/seshat

For the latest news, and a full list of lectures and events in NMC, please visit our website: www.nmc.utoronto.ca
**Spotlight on Postdoctoral Research**

**Dr. Stephen Batiuk** earned his PhD in Near Eastern Archaeology at the UofT in 2005. Since the completion of his studies he has held Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowships at the University of Toronto and the Johns Hopkins University, and he has been a lecturer at Wilfrid Laurier University and Koç University in Istanbul (Turkey). Currently, he teaches the introductory course on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East at NMC.

Dr. Batiuk’s postdoctoral research focuses on Archaeoinformatics – the incorporation of computers and digital technology in the collection, analysis, and visualization of archaeological data. In this capacity, he manages the Computational Research on the Ancient Near East (CRANE) Project directed by Prof. Tim Harrison, which is breaking new ground with the integration of data from a growing number of archaeological projects in the Orontes Watershed in Syria and Turkey, and developing new and innovative methods to explore these datasets in ways that were not possible with past technologies. As part of CRANE, Steve has been spearheading several subprojects developing various methods for the 3D modeling of archaeological data, from architecture to ceramics, to allow both researchers and the wider public to explore archaeological remains in a virtual environment.

Steve has also been using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and ethnographic studies to explore the role of exploitation of resources in the Ancient Near East. He recently published an article on the role of wine in the Early Bronze Age societies of the Transcaucasus, Eastern Anatolia and Northern Syria in the *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*. He is presently working on an ethnographic study of the collection and use of wood and charcoal as fuel in highland Ethiopia, comparing it to the cuneiform records of ancient Mesopotamia to understand the logistics and economics of fuel procurement needed to drive the evolving technologies and industries of Mesopotamia in the formative period of the third millennium BCE.

**Research and Publications**

**Dr. Katja Goebs** has published an article entitled "Egyptian mythos as logos: Attempt at a redefinition of mythical thinking", in: E. Frood, A. McDonald (eds.), *Decorum and Experience: Essays in Ancient Culture for John Baines*. Oxford: Griffith Institute (2013), 127-34.

The article examines the foundational role of myth as a category of cultural discourse. In relating the ancient Egyptian evidence to recent findings in the Cognitive Sciences and Neuropsychology, it is suggested that myth not only plays an important role as a central feature of cultural expression, but equally as something that might be called a ‘cognitive tool’. Individual mythical actors and groupings, or episodes, may encode various snippets of experience and knowledge, while the narratives used to connect these elements serve to interpret them and to relate them to personal experience. In this way, myth emerges as an interpretive and mnemonic device that transcends cultural and historical boundaries.
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