

PERSPECTIVES *On Religion*

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Frederick M. Smith Receives Fulbright Award to study Procession and Possession in the Indian Himalayas



Prof. Fred Smith received a Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence Award for the academic year 2015-16 to conduct primary research on the relationship between possession and religious processions in the Central and Western Himalayas, from Kumaon in eastern Uttarakhand to central Himachal Pradesh.

Possession is typically found in festivals and local processions in South Asia. In some processions, oracular possession and consultation are among the primary attractions, and they are structurally part of the processions themselves. Prof. Smith notes that, "among the prominent pilgrimage processions, which I have witnessed and which stimulated my interest in the topic, are the annual trek of the deity Gaṅgā Devī from her summer home in Gangotri, near the source of the Ganges, to her winter home in Mukhba, about 25 km downriver,... and on a much larger scale

the possession procession and accompanying fair in Mandi in central Himachal Pradesh in the early spring."

Although possession is characteristic of most public rituals in India, what Prof. Smith proposes is an intrinsic link between possession and procession, at least in the Himalayas. The project will be a targeted study of a specific ritual complex that features possession in a geographical area that has a more or less connected and shared political, religious, and social history. One of the primary objectives of the project is to understand the conception and presence of divinity as it moves across the area in shifting guises.

Two other issues are intimately linked and will be explored in the course of his fieldwork: (1) A hierarchical order of local deities and their social and political networking that is established at every festival or procession, regardless of its size, even if only one or two deities are involved; (2) The cultural and historical mechanisms that connect the present with its resonances in the *Mahābhārata* two millennia ago. Prof. Smith notes, "This has been explored by Hildebeitel in South India and Sax in Garhwal, but I would like to test the hypothesis of a more direct

Frederick M. Smith (cont.)

link with the descriptions of the festivals in the second book (Sabhā-parvan) and fourteenth book (Āśvamedhika-parvan) of the *Mahābhārata* in connection with Yudhiṣṭhira's royal consecration and horse sacrifice, respectively, which are strikingly reminiscent with what we find today in the lower Himalayas. This requires much more exposure to today's festivals. I hope to attend several of these in order to sharpen (or weaken) this insight. This research will contribute to our understanding of the character of *Mahābhārata* transmission since the composition of the Sanskrit epic."

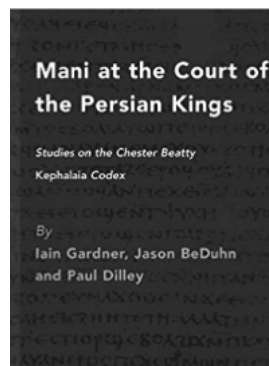
Finally, Prof. Smith expects to examine the role of modernity in these fairs and of modern

education in possession ritual. "Among the more timely issues to which I will have access are the effects on the oracular enterprise of the floods of 2012 and 2013 in Garhwal and the consequent migration of settled residents away from these afflicted areas, and the effect of outsiders, even of tourism, on these processions." This migration is already causing families in the area to consult the local oracles associated with the processional deities. "I have observed this in the central Bhagirathi valley, near the town of Uttarkashi, with a deity called Kaṇḍār *devatā*, one of the most important processional deities in the area."

"I expect this study to result in a number of articles, conference

presentations, and eventually a monograph that will contribute not only to the literature on possession, processions, and festivals in the Himalayas and in India in general, but to a greater understanding of the dynamics of religious interaction and modernity in India. It will also contribute to a greater knowledge of Indian history, especially the manner in which the *Mahābhārata* and its cultural memory in the Indian Himalayas have led to cultural formations that have left a deep and irrevocable impact on this important and to a great extent understudied region of India. Most importantly, however, it will contribute to our knowledge of the unique forms of religiosity and sociopolitical interactions in the Indian Himalayas."

Recent Faculty Books



Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex

Paul Dilley (with Iain Gardner, University of Sydney,
and Jason BeDuhn, Northern Arizona University)

In *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings* the authors explore evidence arising from their project to edit the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* codex. This new text presents Mani at the heart of Sasanian Iran in dialogue with its sages and nobles, acting as a cultural mediator between East and West and

interpreter of Christian, Iranian, and Indian traditions. These interdisciplinary studies advance research in several fields and will be of interest to scholars of Manichaeism, Sasanian Iran, and the development of religions in Late Antiquity.

Other Graduate Student awards 2015-16

Daniel Amodeo: Graduate College Post Comprehensive Summer Fellowship, 2015.

Kyle Dieleman: Fall 2015 Post-Comprehensive Research Award; Fall 2015 Residential Fellowship at the Leibniz-Institute for European History in Mainz, Germany; Spring 2016 Marcus Bach Fellowship.

John Kennedy: Fall 2015 Post-Comprehensive Research Award.

Jason Sprague: Graduate College Post Comprehensive Summer Fellowship 2015; Summer Travel Grant through the Cushwa Center, University of Notre Dame.

Two of our Graduate Students receive Ballard Seashore Dissertation Fellowships

Brandon Dean

“Look, Up in the Sky: Superman as Lived Religion in Contemporary American Culture”

Brandon Dean is in the 5th year of his Ph.D. program, and his advisor is Prof. Richard Turner. In addition to the Ballard Seashore Fellowship, Brandon’s past awards include the Alice Marguerite Blough Award (2013 & 2015), and the President and Mrs. Eugene Gilmore Award in 2014. Brandon has also twice offered his own class based on his dissertation. Here is Brandon’s description of his project:

“In my dissertation I argue that mass media representations of Superman, which span more than 75 years, have produced a mythology, iconography, ethical code, and set of practices that reflect a dynamic relationship with other religious systems in the United States. The presentation of Superman by his creators and the reception of Superman by his readers are heavily influenced by Christianity, Judaism, and American civil religion (he does, after all, represent “truth, justice, and *the American way*”) along with many other religious worldviews. I explore the dynamic interactions between Superman and his fans and show that Superman is utilized by his fans to understand theological and ethical issues while, at the same time, their understanding of Superman shapes those theological and ethical opinions and ideas.

One theme of my dissertation is the religious work that people do through the figure of Superman. The producers of Superman’s media content used religious traditions to construct the content for their cinematic and comic book representations. Superman strikes poses reminiscent of the crucifixion of Jesus or Michelangelo’s *Pieta*. Angels and demons make appearances throughout the comics. Superman himself is referred to by other characters within the comic-book narratives as an angel, a golem, and even a god. However, the use of religious iconography, mythology, and ideology is not the main focus of my dissertation. I am more interested in exploring how the producers of the comic books and films use Superman narratives to work out personal, cultural, religious questions and issues—that is, the way the producers utilize the Superman mythos as a site for religious play and creativity.

Another important theme is the role Superman plays in the lives and imaginations of his audience. In order to examine the religious dimensions of the Superman narrative and its reception among diverse audiences, I conduct an interdisciplinary study that brings together

textual analysis, film criticism, visual culture, and ethnography. By applying these different approaches and methods in the humanities and social sciences, I demonstrate the multiple ways that the Superman culture fulfills religious functions and contributes to a broader religious understanding among its audiences and fans, while also showing the diverse ways that that audiences receive and embody the larger Superman narrative and mythology.

Sumeyye Pakdil-Kesgin

“Identity and Awareness: Religion, Politics, and Turkish Women”

Sumeyye Pakdil-Kesgin is in her 6th year of graduate study at Iowa, and her advisor is Prof. Ahmed Souaiaia. In addition to the Ballard Seashore Fellowship, Sumeyye’s past awards include the Donald Haas Award (Fall 2010), Religious Studies Department Summer Grant (Summer 2012), the Marcus Bach Fellowship Award (2014), and the Graduate College Post-Comprehensive Summer Research Award (Summer 2015). Here is a description of her project, from Sumeyye:

“My dissertation explores the role of religion in women’s awareness of themselves, the decisions they make, and the lives they lead. I analyze the ways in which contemporary female leaders in Turkish politics perceive the influence of Islam, in particular, on their understanding(s) of themselves and their political aspirations.

The discussion of women’s roles and capacities has largely been limited, in Turkey, to a discussion of their private lives, and discussions of their private lives have been relegated to the realm of religion. It is therefore important to examine religion’s influences on women who have become active participants in the public sphere. In this study, I seek to show the ways in which women have bargained with both the state and religion in order to increase their social and political competence and power.

In many places around the world, and in a variety of ways, women are constrained from participating fully in political life. They are given few, if any, reasons to believe in their potential as visionaries and leaders. The rationale for limiting women’s opportunities in the political sphere is often rooted in religion. Religion, or some interpretations thereof, expects women to focus their energies and talents on the private sphere and leave the business of politics to

Ballard Seashore Dissertation Fellowships (cont'd.)

men. Actually, most religions give women *mixed* messages about their roles and capacities. Many women take advantage of this ambiguity to interpret their relationship to the realm of politics in creative and sometimes surprising ways.

In this research project, I focus on the complex interaction

between gender, politics and religion in Turkey. I show the diversity and distinction of female understanding(s) of state and religion, as well as the state's interpretation of the role of women in society. I employ a case study and ethnographical approaches with women politicians being the main subject. By studying women

from interdisciplinary perspectives (political science, anthropology, sociology, and law), this project seeks to uncover how Turkish women in politics chart their course and construct their public identities in accordance with the triangular relationship between state, religion, and gender.

Ever-Evolving Curriculum

Students at the university are always changing, and each new class of first-year students differs noticeably from the last. Moreover, religion is continually evolving, taking new and unexpected forms. The pace of all this change has definitely increased over the past few years, due in part to the influence of global social media.

Our faculty seeks to be exceptionally creative in showing each generation of students how the *study* of religion—which is itself continually advancing—is relevant to their lives and uniquely able to help them figure out how to live with other human beings, many of whom see the world very differently than they do. Several new Religious Studies courses are under development, but here are three courses that have recently been offered.

Professor Michelene Pesantubbee is teaching a course titled “**Tricksters, Fools, and Creators.**” Trickster figures are found all around the world in many forms including coyote; br'er rabbit; spider; raven; raccoon-dogs; and human figures like the apostle Paul or Joha, the Jewish trickster. They are often depicted as bungling fools or dupes, but also as god-like creators, transformers, or culture heroes. Storytellers have long entertained and educated their listeners with tales of trickster exploits; and many trickster figures like Loki have been recast in comic books and on movie screens. These often allegorical stories of tricksters' antics can teach moral lessons or challenge societal structures or values. By examining trickster stories across time and space students will gain insight into how historical events and particular places inform beliefs and practices. Students will examine selected ancient, premodern, and contemporary trickster stories to understand how they are experienced by different cultures and how they shape, inform, and reflect human responses to their environment.

Professor Jenna Supp-Montgomerie is bringing new concepts and methods of study to the department with a course called “**Digital Media and Religion.**” Some people characterize the digital age by the rise of science and technology and the death of religion. This course offers a different perspective. It explores diverse relationships between religion and technology—from enthusiastic fusion to adamant prohibition—focusing on three questions: What makes a medium digital? How do we connect to and disconnect from the world around us via digital media? And is there such a thing as “online religion”? Capitalizing on the vibrant world of digital technology in contemporary lived religion, from kosher cell phones to aboriginal satellites, this course inquires critically into the ways that a humanities approach provides unique and important resources for understanding new media and cultural life.

Professor Kristy Nabhan-Warren is offering a novel course entitled “**Sport and Religion in America.**” A lot of young people today are growing up in sport cultures that include religious and spiritual elements. As the recent media coverage of the World Cup revealed, for many people in the Americas sport has itself become a religion. In “Sport and Religion in America,” students are introduced to various theories of religion and shown how to apply them to the discourse of sporting events and cultures. Students read academic articles as well as popular news reports that demonstrate the ways in which sport and religion intersect. The class is interactive: YouTube videos and podcasts are used in order to provide vivid examples for discussion.

Watch for additional courses as well—on themes of death, bioethics, economics, and more.

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

Robert Cargill welcomed his latest child, Judah Robert Roan, into the world on Sept. 30, 2015. He traveled extensively throughout the Mediterranean with his wife, Roslyn, while researching various cities for his forthcoming book with HarperCollins press, *Cities that Built the Bible*, which will be released in March 2016. He gave a paper at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature entitled “Swapping Sex for Drugs: Mandrake Mythology and Fertility Drugs in Genesis 30:14-24,” he also appeared on a panel entitled “Presenting the Christian Apocrypha to Non-Scholarly Audiences.” He gave a presentation to the Biblical Archaeology Society entitled “A Deluge of Flood Stories: Flood Mythology, the Bible, and Aronofsky’s Noah,” which showed the Jewish literary traditions behind Darren Aronofsky’s blockbuster movie *Noah*. He gave some short video lectures for *Bible Odyssey*, a NEH-funded project of the Society of Biblical Literature on the topics of “Biblical Marriage,” “Origins of Baptism,” and the “Essenes.” He also gave a lecture entitled “New Approaches in Digital Archaeology at Tel Azekah, Israel,” to the Iowa chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America. Dr. Cargill delivered several lectures to the Agudas Achim congregation, including lectures on “Jonah,” “Qohelet,” “Maccabees,” “Esther,” “Song of Songs,” “Ruth,” “Lamentations,” and a Jerusalem Day lecture entitled “From Shalem to Jerusalem: The Etymology and Historiography of the Name ‘Jerusalem’.” He also appeared on numerous TV shows, including “Weather of Biblical Proportions” on the *Weather Channel*, and on *Discovery*, he participated Iowa Public Radio’s “Talk of Iowa” with Charity Nebbe about the history and political symbolism of the Ten Commandments. In the fall of 2014, Dr. Cargill taught courses on The Dead Sea Scrolls and Banned

From the Bible: Intro to Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, in addition to teaching Biblical Hebrew I. He was awarded a release from teaching in the Spring of 2015 to work on his HarperCollins book, as well as his forthcoming book from Oxford University Press on the biblical figure of Melchizedek.

Diana Fritz Cates completed her third year as Department Chair. In the realm of research, she participated in an American Academy of Religion Collaborative Research Grant, which brought an international team of scholars together to address the question, “How Do We Study Religion and Emotion?” The grant made it possible for Prof. Cates to present a paper on “The Morality of Emotion and the Problem of Definition.” She also presented a four-part lecture series on the topic of love for the Trappist abbey of New Melleray. This year, her research hit a compelling fork in the road. Even as she works to complete her manuscript *The Ethics of Love and Hatred*, she hopes to lead a multi-disciplinary group of scholars and practitioners in a humanistic and social-scientific study of nursing unit practices that contribute to resiliency within intensive, acute, and palliative care units, beginning with the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Much of her remaining time this year was spent on new course development. She participated in a week-long Digital Bridges Summer Institute on Digital Pedagogy, supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, during which she developed innovative means of engaging students intellectually and empathically in a new course on biomedical ethics. The course is called Hard Cases in Healthcare: The Beginning of Life. She continued to serve the university and her profession, while also participating in broader public engagement. She was appointed Chair of the

Advisory Board for the UI Center for Human Rights. She continued to serve as a Trustee and frequent manuscript reviewer for the *Journal of Religious Ethics*, as well as a reviewer for other journals and academic presses. She joined her colleague Bob Cargill for a discussion of “The Ten Commandments and American Culture” on “Talk of Iowa,” hosted by Charity Nebbe.

Paul Dilley taught the Genealogy of Religion in spring 2015, a required course in the new four semester graduate sequence, which explores the developing concepts of “religion” in the Western tradition, including its relationship to magic and science. He also re-developed the Judaism, Christianity, and Islam course, which he will teach in spring 2016. He recently completed a book manuscript, “The Care of Souls in Cenobitic Monasticism: Cognition and Discipline,” which is currently under review. He continues working on the critical edition of a Coptic manuscript containing the only surviving copy of writings by the famous Christian heretic Mani. The manuscript is held at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, where he worked for several weeks in June with his colleagues Iain Gardner (Sydney) and Jason BeDuhn (Northern Arizona). He and his colleagues published a co-authored book on the subject, *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings: Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex*, published by Brill in Nov. 2014, to which he contributed three chapters. Dilley was selected as a Mellon Fellow in Critical Bibliography for 2015-2017, for work on the intersection of digital humanities and manuscript studies. He and his co-PIs Timothy Barrett (UI Center for the Book) and Katherine Tachau (History) will be leading a Mellon-Sawyer seminar in 2016-2017, “Textual and Cultural Exchanges:

The Manuscript Across Pre-Modern Eurasia,” which will bring many internationally recognized speakers to campus to pursue a major question of “big-history:” the cross-cultural development of the book. Finally, with co-PI Sarah Bond and Lead Developer Ryan Horne, he launched “Big Ancient Mediterranean,” a website for the co-ordinated search of geospatial, network, and textual data from the ancient world.

Kristy-Nabhan-Warren has enjoyed a productive year. On the teaching front, she has had a great time teaching her Fall GenEd course “Religions in America Today” and her Spring course “Sport and Religion in America.” Both are courses she developed at the University of Iowa, which are geared toward drawing students in to the study of religion and hopefully to a minor or double major. Kristy is developing “U.S. Latino Religions” which will be offered next fall 2016 for the first time and as part of the university’s new Latino Studies minor. Kristy continues to enjoy working with graduate students and is currently enjoying teaching “Gender and Religion,” a course that she developed, which is cross-listed with Gender, Women’s and Sexuality Studies (GWSS). She hopes to develop an undergraduate version of this course that can be cross-listed with GWSS. In her role as the Director of Graduate Studies, Kristy continues to meet regularly with graduate students to ensure they are being mentored effectively and to ensure their ongoing professionalization. She is proud of the students’ many accomplishments and that they are increasingly proactive in their professionalization. She sponsored an “AAR Boot Camp” on November 13th to help prepare students who attended our very large and overwhelming annual conference. Students who presented papers practiced in front of their peers and those who are on the job market had mock

interviews. Kristy is also working on establishing a regular brown bag series where graduate student and faculty research and teaching is showcased. Details forthcoming! Kristy has had a busy year presenting at conferences as an invited speaker. She presented her paper “Reframing U.S. Catholicism: Migration, Trans-nationalism, and Shared Experiences” at the Organization of American Historians April 18, 2015. She presented at three conferences this summer (2015). The first was The Fourth Biennial Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture Conference, June 4-7 (sponsored by IUPUI, Indianapolis). Kristy’s presentation can be accessed in the Proceedings <http://www.raac.iupui.edu/publications/conference-proceedings>. The second conference was as a selected participant in The American Parish Project (TAPP), held at The University of Southern California, June 25-27 where she presented her current research “Cornbelt Catholicism: Latinos, Anglos and Religion in America’s Heartland.” This article will be the springboard for a fourth book manuscript. The third conference was as keynote speaker at the National Lutheran Secretariat’s annual meeting where she gave a talk on the Cursillo movement and Via de Cristo’s role in the broadband 20th century Christian renewal movement. The meeting was held July 23rd at Kristy’s former institution, Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. The fourth summer conference was at the International Congress of Historical Studies in Jinan, China, where Kristy presented a paper on the Cursillo movement and the spread of global Christianity.

On the writing front, Kristy’s article “‘We are the Church’: The Cursillo Movement and the Reinvention of Catholic Identities in Postwar America and Beyond” was just issued in *U.S. Catholic Historian*. Vol 33 no. 1. Winter issue 2015. Pp. 81-98. Her

article “Hispanics and Religion” is forthcoming in the *Oxford Religion Encyclopedia*. Oxford University Press, Spring 2016. Kristy continues to review several books a year for journals and is a reviewer for NYU Press, UNC Press, Rutgers University Press, Columbia University Press, Cornell University Press, and Yale University Press. She continues to be active on several AAR steering committees (Religion and Social Sciences; Sport and Religion; *Spiritus; A Journal of Christian Spirituality*) and is active in the AAR as a presenter, respondent, and session chair. Kristy is at work on two manuscripts: *Latin@s, Religion, and the Reconquista of América* for The University of Chicago Press, Chicago History of American Religions series, and *Cornbelt Catholicism*.

And finally and certainly not least, Kristy enjoys spending time with her husband Steve and their three children: Cormac, Declan, and Josie, and their new puppy Bandit. Kristy enjoys making vegetarian soups, pumpkin breads, and taking Bandit on long walks. And she aims to keep up with her busy and active kids!

Raymond Mentzer continues to teach an entry level sequence of courses on medieval and modern religious culture as well as more advanced courses on the history of early modern Christianity and the Reformation. This fall semester 2015 he received the Iowa Regents Award for Faculty Excellent in teaching, research and service. In addition, American and European colleagues offered a tribute to his work by organizing four sessions in his honor at the October 2015 Sixteenth Century Studies Conference meeting in Vancouver, Canada. Mentzer’s ongoing research program includes the publication of two book chapters: “Reorganizing the Pastorate: Innovations and Challenges in the French Reformed Churches,” in *Collaboration, Conflict, and Con-*

tinuity in the Reformation. Essays in Honour of James M. Estes on his Eightieth Birthday. Edited by Konrad Eisenbickler. Essays and Studies 34 (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014), pp. 195-215; and “The Practice of Church Discipline in Lutheran and Reformed Areas,” in *Entfaltung und zeitgenössische Wirkung der Reformation im europäischen Kontext. Dissemination and Contemporary Impact of the Reformation in a European Context.* Edited by Irene Dingel and Ute Lotz-Heumann (Heidelberg: Gütersloh, 2015), pp. 288-301. Five other book chapters are in various stages of production and a volume co-edited with Bertrand Van Ruymbeke (Université de Paris) entitled *A Companion to the Huguenot* will be published in the Brill Companion series in April 2016. Recent book reviews appeared in the *Catholic Historical Review* and *Renaissance Quarterly*. Mentzer continues to serve on the Governing Board of the H.H. Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is a member of the editorial board of the *Sixteenth Century Journal* and the *Revue d'histoire du protestantisme* (Paris). He is also the American representative to the International Commission for the History and Study of Christianity, a subunit of the International Commission of Historical Sciences (a UNESCO organization).

Michéle Pesantubbee continues to work on her book project on Native American women and religious movements. She is also co-editing an exciting new project on Native Foodways in a Global Economy under contract with SUNY Press. The idea for this collection of essays grew out of a Native American Traditions in the Americas Group session on indigenous foods and religion at the 2013 AAR annual meeting. Pesantubbee also continues to co-chair the Native American Traditions in the Americas Group and

participates in the AAR's mentoring programs for junior faculty and graduate students. In 2014 she presented a paper on “Conversion-centric Ideology and the Massacre at Wounded Knee” for the Religious Conversions Group at AAR and she was the invited speaker for the Howard Harrod Lecture at Vanderbilt Divinity School. In March of this year she also participated in the “Religion in Early America” symposium hosted by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, DC. This past summer in addition to teaching summer school she developed a new course, “Tricksters, Fools, and Creators,” which she is teaching this fall semester. She continues to teach her American Indian Environmentalism course as well as Sacred World of Native Americans.

Morten Schlütter, Associate Professor of Chinese Religions, continues his directorship of the UI Center for Asian and Pacific Studies (CAPS), where he promotes talks and other programming on East Asian religions as much as he can. He is currently chairing a search committee to fill the C. Maxwell and Elizabeth M. Stanley Family and Korea Foundation Chair in Korean Studies, at the senior associate professor or full professor levels, and one of the departments in which the appointment may be made is Religious Studies (so we are keeping our fingers crossed). Schlütter is also continuing his teaching and research on Buddhism and Chinese religions. In the spring of 2015, Schlütter held a Career Development Award, working on his current book project that is tentatively entitled *The Evolution of the Platform Sutra and the Changing Notions of What Chan Should Be*. Also in the spring, his essay “Holy Body, Sacred Space: Chan Masters and the Body as a Sacred Abode in Medieval Chinese Chan Buddhism,” appeared in an edited volume published in Chinese, and

his “Kānhuà (Keyword) Meditation in Chinese Zen,” in Halvor Eifring, ed., *Cultural Histories of Meditation — Practice and Interpretation in a Global Perspective* (University of Hawai'i Press), is scheduled to appear later in 2015. In September 2015 Schlütter gave a presentation entitled “Who Wrote the *Platform Sūtra*, When and Why?” at the Symposium on Text and Context in East Asian Buddhism, Yale University.

Frederick Smith taught his regular (and highly enjoyable) courses in the academic year 2014-15, including *Religion and Healing* and *History of Yoga*, constantly updating the readings to reflect the growing scholarship on these topics. He presented papers at the annual meeting of the AAR (in San Diego in Nov. 2014) on “Discrepancies between video and narrative presentations of Vedic ritual,” two invited lectures at Rhodes College (in Memphis TN in April 2015) on Vedic sacrificial ritual, and one on the sociolinguistics of possession in Indian Buddhism at the University of Calgary (in April 2015). He has five articles in press at the moment, which should all be out by the time of next year's Faculty Perspectives, and has written a number of book reviews that have appeared in various journals. He has served as an external reader for several Ph.D. dissertations, and saw one of his students at Iowa complete her Ph.D. dissertation in spring 2015 (P.J. Johnston), and two others successfully defend their comprehensive exams (Pranav Prakash and Peter Basel). Professor Smith also served on the executive committee for the Division of World Languages, Literature, and Culture, and was Director of the South Asian Studies Program (a constituent unit of International Programs) in which he was instrumental in bringing a dozen speakers from outside to campus. Most important, Professor Smith has been awarded a Fulbright-Nehru research award to spend the aca-

demical year 2015-16 in India. He is writing the present paragraph from his residence in the Himalayas, near Uttarkashi, India, in a very nice but unheated house, with the temperature around 40°. It is fortunate that very efficient wood stoves are available in the Himalayas. His project for the academic year is to examine linguistic issues that arise in the performance of small scale processions in (often remote) mountain villages, in which oracular spirit mediums mediate between the local deities and petitioners, while the mediums and a supporting staff transport the deities along pilgrimage routes in often difficult terrain. But more on this next year. He has also been called upon to deliver lectures in various parts of India during fall and winter 2015-16. Professor Smith is the first ever three-time Fulbright grantee at the University of Iowa.

Jordan Smith, Lecturer in Biblical Studies, is working hard in his second year as Undergraduate Outreach Coordinator. His focus this year has been on increasing the visibility on campus of the department and its course offerings, helping organize events for undergraduate students, creating two new courses on Religion and Film and an interactive online introduction to the Bible and its influence on modern culture, and creating more interest in the department's honor society TAK. He has also begun developing a series on Religion and Film that will be accessible to the community. He was invited to give a series of guest lectures on the afterlife and deliver a colloquium talk on martyrdom at the University of Texas at Austin and a talk about the Maccabean Revolt at the joint meeting of the American Handel Society and the Society for 17th Century Music. He is currently developing a chapter for an edited volume, a conference paper on martyrdom in the 3rd century CE Church Fathers, and a book on the relationship of martyrdom and the conquest of the Promised Land.

Ahmed Souaiaia taught three courses per semester during the academic year 2014-15, offered several independent research courses for graduate and undergraduate students, and continued to mentor MA and Ph.D. students. Fulfilling the strategic mission of the University in the area of publicly engaged scholarship, Prof. Souaiaia published more than 30 essays, lectured on campus and off campus, and offered several media interviews. He convened the first international academic conference about the Arab Spring. Prof. Souaiaia traveled to Tunisia to conduct field work for his ongoing research for a book project and was awarded a fellowship to support Scholar Assistant for the academic year 2015-16.

Jenna Supp-Montgomery researches the role of religious discourse and practice in the negotiation of technological change. She recently published an article on affect theory and the study of religion in *Religion Compass* 9, no. 10 (October 2015) and edited a special volume of *Communication Inquiry* 39, no. 4 (2015) on religion and media. She continues to work on her book manuscript about the role of religion in the creation and use of the first electric global communication network. Jenna developed two new classes this year. This fall, she is teaching "Magic Machines: Technology and Social Change," which examines the sweeping cultural shifts—with significant reverberations in religious life—that often accompany the adoption of new technology. In the spring she will teach "Public Life in the U.S.: Communication and Religion," which explores the double role religion has led in American politics as both a source of unity and a source of division. Alongside these new classes, she is enjoying teaching her first graduate seminar, "Theories and Methods in Religious Studies" and an undergraduate course, "Digital Media and Religion." Jenna also

engages the intersection of religion and media at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion. This year, she will deliver a paper titled, "A Telegraph for the Sultan and Other Spectacular Technology: Material Media in Colonial Christian Mission" and will serve her sixth and final year as the co-chair of the Religion, Media, and Culture Group.

Richard Brent Turner signed a contract with Indiana University Press this fall, to write a new introduction and an updated bibliography for his book *Jazz Religion, the Second Line, and Black New Orleans: After Hurricane Katrina, Second Edition*. In July 2015, he gave a lecture at George Washington University on "The Nation of Islam," for the NEH Summer Institute: American Muslims, History, Culture, and Politics. Turner presented a paper, "Haiti-New Orleans Spirited Performance Connections in an Age of Global Apartheid" at the Caribbean Studies Association Annual Meeting in May 2015. In December 2014, he presented his paper, "'As The Light Shined from the East': Imam W.D. Mohammed and Controversies over Innovation in African American Islam" at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in Washington D.C. Professor Turner continues to serve on the editorial board for the *Journal of African Religions* and on the board of directors for KOSANBA at the Center for Black Studies Research, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Reflections of my colleague Robert D. Baird



During his career, Robert D. Baird contributed significantly to higher education in general, the University of Iowa, and the Department of Religious studies in particular.

Bob was born on 29 June 1933 in Philadelphia and died at the age of 82 on 30 October 2015

in Texas. He attended Houghton College in southern New York where he majored in philosophy and religion. Then Bob headed west to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where he earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1957. The next year found Bob at Southern Methodist University in Dallas earning a Master Degree in Sacred Theology.

Finally, Bob arrived in Iowa City to pursue graduate studies in the School of Religion at the University of Iowa. Deciding to focus on American Religious History, he wrote a Ph.D. dissertation under the direction of Robert S. Michaelsen, Director of the School of Religion. Its title: *Religion in Life: An Inquiry into the Dominant Motif in the Theology of Horace Bushnell*. To his colleagues Bob freely admitted that that effort was his last in American Religious History.

Once Bob was appointed Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa, he concentrated his teaching and research in Asian religions. During the next thirty-five years, from 1966 when he was hired to his retirement in 2001, Bob offered a variety of courses in the Department of Religious Studies and pursued a research program that yielded numerous articles, books, presentations at meetings of several learned societies, as well as lectures at many institutions of higher education.

Bob was the author of two books (*Category Formation and the History of Religions* [1971] and *Essays in the History of Religions* [1991]). In the former he argued that the study of religion must begin with a definition of religion rather than ending with one. With Alfred Bloom, Bob co authored *India and Far Eastern Religious Traditions* (1971). *Religion and Man: An Introduction*, edited by W. Richard Comstock (1971) contains several chapters written by Bob. Moreover, Bob was the editor of five studies: *Methodological Issues in the Study of Religion* (1976), *Religion in Modern India* (1981), *Essays in the History of Religions* (1991), *Religion and Law in Independent India* (1993), and *Methodological Issues*

in Religious Studies (1995). Bob had numerous articles and edited volumes published in various venues.

Bob taught briefly at three colleges (Coe, Grinnell, and Wheaton) and at four other universities (the University of Calgary, the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of Kansas, Western Kentucky University).

Bob's most significant research leave found him (with his family) in New Delhi, India (1971-72) where having been awarded a faculty fellowship from the American Institute of Indian Studies, he conducted research on the relationship of Indian national legislation to religious change in India. Two decades later he was made a Senior Fellow in the American Institute of Indian Studies.

His wisdom was evident as he participated at a consultation on preparing graduate students for careers as teachers (at the Wabash Center at Wabash College) and at Florida International University and the University of Kansas where he reviewed their Departments of Religious Studies. Additionally, Bob served the Council on Graduate Studies in Religion as chair of its Committee on Admissions and Standards. And for five years (1979-1984) he was book review editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.

Bob's abilities and attainments were aptly recognized when he was promptly promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in 1969 and five years later to the rank of Full Professor. In the department he assumed such duties as being chair of the department's Long Range Planning Committee and chair of a committee charged with designing a new introductory course required of graduate students: "Methods and Theories in the Study of Religion." And from 1995 to 2000 he served admirably as Director of the School of Religion.

Throughout his career Bob helped students to understand religious groups different from their own. Once he remarked to his colleagues: "I take very seriously the idea that in a public university we have a responsibility to teach *about* religion, but not to teach religion. That distinction is critical."

I'll close with several comments made by Bob's departmental colleagues. Jim McCue observed, "The appointment of Bob Baird in 1966 marked an important turning point. Increasingly, the orientation of the School was to foster the study of religion as a global phenomenon, to study it in its many forms across a variety of the world's cultures."

Diana F. Cates, current chair of the department, recalled, “Bob Baird was a funny and gentle soul. They reflect a trust in one’s colleagues that cannot be taken for granted in academia.”

Diana added, “My favorite memories of Bob are of the times he dropped by my office to ask for feedback on some departmental matter. He made me feel that my voice mattered, not only to him, but to the future of the department. In this way, he proved to be a kind and consistent mentor, and I remain grateful for his friendship. He also liked a good argument, and was wonderfully stubborn on matters of method in the study of religion. I say ‘wonderfully’ because such disagreements are essential to the intellectual life of a department.”

Maureen Walterhouse (Administrative Assistant in the department) tells of the way in which Bob’s sense of humor and cheerfulness lit up the third floor of Gilmore Hall, especially during the years of his departmental leadership.

Helen Goldstein said this about Bob: “He was a good colleague, efficient and fair during the years that he served as director of the department, and always fun to be around.”

There was no colleague that I enjoyed more than Bob. Excluding his first year in the department, Bob’s tenure and mine overlapped. I first met Bob in February, 1967, when I interviewed for a position in the department. Even then I thought, “This is a welcoming person whom I’d like to know better.” Our fields of study were different (mine in the Hebrew Bible) and different things excited us academically. Once Bob told me, “I like nothing better than a cogent argument.” I replied, “I like nothing better than something said well in lucid English and possibly employing a compelling figure of speech such as an artful metaphor.”

Our wives were elementary school teachers. Often Ruth and I entertained Bob and his wife Pat in our home or they entertained us in theirs. For many years Bob and I were roommates as we attended the joint annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature. Often we took lunch together in a nearby restaurant. Bob endured my jokes just as I endured his.

Bob and I enjoyed telling each other stories concerning issues in our department. Once Bob told me that during his first semester, Director George Forell urged him to switch denominations, leaving the Presbyterians and joining

the Methodists. George argued that since the Methodist Church in Iowa gave money annually to the department, a Methodist on the faculty would be fitting and at the moment there was no faculty member who was a Methodist. Bob responded, “If you’re so keen to have a Methodist on your faculty, *you* should switch from the Lutheran church to the Methodist!” Nobody who knew George Forell would assume that George would take Bob’s suggestion seriously. Truly, George was a Lutheran. On the day that Bob turned 50, I brought in a box cake that I had baked to help celebrate. Not wishing to have his birthday publicized, Bob was less than cheered. Seven months later it was pay-back time. When I turned 50, he and his daughter Janna (who was a bout nine) sneaked into my office the evening before and filled it with helium balloons. Clearly, I was in for a surprise the next morning.

When Bob served as Director of the department, he was able to keep his duties and our friendship distinct. He was a good listener and fair-minded. Truly, I feel blessed for having known Bob Baird.

J. Kenneth Kuntz,
Professor Emeritus in
Religious Studies



The University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
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THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S CHAIR 2015



Diana Fritz Cates

Dramatic changes are taking place today in higher education. Sometimes it seems as though the University of Iowa is uniquely affected by social and political currents. But then we realize that similar changes and challenges are occurring across the country and, indeed, around the world. Most notably, many students are worried about their future; they crave the prospect of economic security; and they feel pressured to focus on job-oriented fields of study, such as business or engineering. Some students are so concerned with getting a job after graduation that they need to be reminded:

"Yes, we understand. But keep in mind that almost any career you pursue will require that you be imaginative. It will expect you to be a well-informed and interesting person. It will reward you for being a critical thinker, a clear and effective communicator, and a skilled facilitator of dialogue among people who see the world differently. Through the study of

religion you can cultivate all of these strengths.

*At the same time, you can enjoy the rare opportunity to ponder the meaning of life and death. You can gain some historical perspective. You can travel the world mentally, if not also physically. You can practice putting yourself in other people's shoes. College is a time to make a long-term investment in your **mind** so that, whatever you do, you will do it with intelligence and confidence. If you don't make this investment, who will?*

It's easy to add a religion major or minor to any other area of study you might choose."

Even as we are responding to student concerns about the future, we are also responding to their changing modes of thinking and communicating. Many students exhibit a shift away from contemplation and historical reflection, and toward an immersive and present-tense engagement with global social media. We are developing new undergraduate courses that capitalize on the latest developments in the digital humanities. We are also supporting inventive forms of graduate study.

Thank you so much for your continuing support, including your financial gifts. One of the ways we want most to invest our gift money is by offering more student scholarships, which will alleviate some of the monetary worries of undergraduate and graduate students so they have the freedom, if only for a short time, to surrender to their curiosity—whether by means of books or digital technology.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diana Fritz Cates".

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