

STRUGGLES AND STUDIES *in* SRI LANKA

By Peter Franklin '05

I'm in Sri Lanka on a Fulbright fellowship. I've been here since March, and will leave about a week before Christmas. I was also here for a semester during the fall of my junior year at Carleton. My primary occupation here these days is traveling all over the south coast to collect data for an American demographer. He's part of a team of professors who are looking at the role that culture has played in the Tsunami recovery. In particular, they are comparing the reconstruction of the Sinhalese Buddhist/Christian south coast with the Tamil/Muslim east coast. Collecting the data, which primarily involves meeting local government officials is, to put it nicely, a character-building experience. The officials are generally disorganized, lazy, and not always very bright, and I've had to learn (or I should say, am still learning) to work with them because their way is "the way things work in Sri Lanka."

To satisfy the religion major that still burns in me, when I have extra money or time, I've been doing a little of my own research on the side. I'm trying to investigate the attempts over the last couple of years, mostly by Buddhists, to legally prohibit Christian groups that induce "unethical conversions" -- basically any conversion that they suspect is motivated by finance.

It's hard to know what to say about Sri Lanka itself. At this point, I feel enough at home here so I don't spend
continued on PAGE 3...

Interview with:



PROFESSOR CLARKE HUDSON

By Margaret Cremin '08

I met with Clarke Hudson, the new face in the religion department, to ask him a few questions about his interests and his experience at Carleton so far. Clarke is a visiting professor specializing in East Asian religions, and he is currently working on his dissertation, which centers on Daoist meditation practice within the last thousand years. More specifically, Clarke is studying a practice called "inner alchemy", which requires the refinement of one's essence, qi, and spirit through inter-breathing and timing techniques. In deciding on a topic, Clarke looked for an issue in Daosim that hadn't been studied. He studies what he calls "the inside and the outside" -- that is, he studies the history and society surrounding a Daoist master's teachings (the outside), but he must also understand every little detail of his teachings (the inside) so he can tell where the Master diverges from other Daoist thinkers. Clarke is enjoying his time at Carleton so far; he says that "the students come to class ready to talk", and that Carleton has "lively students with lively insights". Clarke is teaching a course on Daoism this fall, and this winter, he will teach two courses -- Religion and Sexuality, and Japanese Religion and Culture. ■

RELIGION MAJORS HONORED

Dean's List
Jessica Chen

Chang- Lan Fellowship
Jessica Chen

Class of 1966 Diversity Achievement Award
Sam Estes

Class of 1963 Fellowship
Sophia Paraschos

Mellon- Mays Undergraduate Fellowship
Winston Persaud

David Maitland- Robert Will Prize
Sam Estes

The Religion Department wishes to congratulate our majors who received various awards at the Honors Convocation in May of 2006 and the Opening Convocation on September 6, 2006.

Are you into...

Spiderman, Talking Vegetables, and burning tires?

Check out "Religion in the News" in the Religion lounge.

Relevant contributions are always welcome.

On Campus:

DR. PATRICIA FRESEN VISITS CARLETON

Dr. Patricia Fresen, a bishop of the Roman Catholic women-priests movement, will give a lecture titled "Prophetic Obedience: From Anti-Apartheid Struggles to the Womenpriests Movement" on Thursday, October 26 at 7:30 pm in the Chapel.

Dr. Fresen, a native of South Africa, served as a sister in the Dominican order for 45 years, working as a teacher and a school principal. She welcomed members of all races to her school in 1972, violating South African apartheid laws.

Fresen traveled to Rome to earn her Licentiate in Sacred Theology with a thesis on liberation theology and the South African struggle for racial justice and freedom. She then returned to South Africa, taught at the National Seminary at Pretoria, and completed her doctorate. She taught at the newly founded St. Augustine College in Johannesburg until she moved to Germany, following her ordination as a priest in a ceremony not recognized by the Vatican. Due to her new role as a womanpriest, she had to leave the Dominican order and resign her teaching position.

In 2005, Fresen became a bishop, and she now coordinates the Program of Preparation for Roman Catholic Womenpriests, which sponsors more than 100 candidates globally. Last summer, she and other bishops presided at the ordinations of women as priests and deacons in Europe and North America; in July, Dr. Fresen presided at an ordination near Pittsburgh.

In addition to her evening lecture, Dr. Fresen will visit Professor Anne Patrick's Liberation Theologies class. Anne met Dr. Fresen during a visit in 2000 to Johannesburg. She says of Fresen, "I recall being especially impressed by her commitment to racial justice. I believe her visit will be a valuable educational opportunity for our students and for many visitors from outside campus." ■



*Dr. Fresen and Prof.
Anne Patrick in 2005.*



In the Lounge:

FALL '06 DISPLAY CASE

Come into the Religion Department Lounge and look at our new display case! The theme for the Fall 2006 term is "Religion and Politics". Thanks to our generous faculty, we can display books and articles from many different religious and political traditions. Some note-worthy items in the display case:

-**The Kairos Document**, a Christian document written by an interracial committee who met in 1985 to discuss the South African Apartheid laws .

-**Buddhism Betrayed**, a book by Stanley Tambiah which was banned in Sri Lanka due to its assertion that Buddhist monks had heightened tensions between the Sinhala majority (mostly Buddhist) and the Tamil minority (mostly Hindu).

-**Postage stamps** celebrating Nurses' and Women's Days in Iran, depicting Zaynab (Muhammad's granddaughter) and Fatima (Muhammad's daughter) supporting the revolution of 1979.

-A replica of a **painting of the Daoist ruler Zhenwu**, who exemplified the Daoist ideal of ruling with inaction.

-A **1990 Oregon Supreme Court Ruling** that states that the prohibition on the sacramental use of peyote (a Native American ritual hallucinogen) violated the free exercise clause of the First Amendment; this decision was later reversed by the US Supreme Court.

-**Jews in American Politics**, a book discussing the American Jewish community's relationships to the major political parties, the media, foreign policy and the conservative movement. ■

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as much time evaluating it as I used to. People who have been to India say that Sri Lanka is more manageable. A lot of the tourists I meet here (there are a lot, mostly from Europe), except for the Buddhist meditators (lots of those do, and many from the US), are disappointed, and say they've had better experiences elsewhere in South and Southeast Asia. Work has me traveling a lot, and I like some places better than others. I am always surprised and impressed by the sense of humor Sri Lankans have. I struggle with the conservatism of the culture. I have no sympathy for either side in the civil war between the Sinhalese dominated Government of Sri Lanka and the notorious Tamil Tigers. And, when I'm feeling particularly homesick, the heat and the mosquitoes, supported by an infrastructure of screenless windows, often get under my skin. Overall, I'm glad to be here; returning home in December feels just about right. ■

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF '06 GRADUATES!

Marie Kim*

Paul Koenig*

Micah Lemons*

Kim Phillips

Jesse Sargent*

Rob Stern

-Summa Cum Laude

-Phi Beta Kappa

Helen Terndrup*

-Distinction in Comps

-Phi Beta Kappa

-Class of 1885 Prize

-Bardwell Smith Prize for

excellence in the Study of

Religion

*denotes Magna Cum Laude

Off Campus:

CAMELS AND CONFLICT IN

CHINA'S XINJIANG PROVINCE

By Jessica Chen '07

I spent my summer in China riding camels, eating lamb every meal, visiting sacred tombs and mosques, and interviewing Muslim minorities. The highlight of the trip was definitely Xinjiang province. Arriving in the bus stop in Urumqi was like exiting China and entering another country. All the signs were suddenly bilingual with Mandarin on top and Uyghur print underneath; it sounded like people around me were speaking in many different languages. Everywhere on the street women were walking around in brightly colored scarves and jeans or covered head to foot in sparkling gowns embroidered with strips of iridescent silver. There is an exoticness to Xinjiang that is still well preserved in some areas, like Kashgar, where the Sunday bazaar remains the biggest event for the city. Every Sunday, and even throughout the week, the streets are crowded with men and women on tractors, donkeys, and horses, driving their products to market. One walks along sidewalks lined with stands selling naan bread, rugs, spices, meat, and anything else you could think of. Kashgar was definitely my favorite city.

I found my time with the Hui and Uyghur people enthralling, exciting, and pleasant. They were friendly and fascinating, and I felt very much at home eating

their foods, wandering their streets, and living in their neighborhoods. The frustrating and alarming thing I discovered was that most Han Chinese did not share this sentiment at all. On the contrary there was blatant stereotyping, racism, and antagonism towards these minorities. Complaints of them being funny smelling, dirty, uneducated, cunning liars came to me from many Han Chinese. There was also a

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jealousy towards the fact that minorities are exempt from the one-child policy, and are allowed lower test scores for college entrance. In Xinjiang especially, because of the controversial history of conquering and modernizing, the Han majority feel that these people owe them something for “saving their land from poverty and backwardness.” Self-segregation was particularly evident between the Han and other minorities. The minority neighborhoods were considered dangerous, dirty, and full of thieves. Even between the Hui

and Uyghur there was some tension. Some Xinjiang Uyghurs found the Hui in Xi'an to be less religious and too assimilated.

I was struck too by the liberalism, fluidity, and openness of the Chinese Muslim community. I was so scared I would have trouble getting into mosques, but the people there were welcoming. One man who I interviewed from the Great Mosque of Xi'an spoke eagerly about everything from women's rights to the war in Iraq, stressing the entire time that Islam was a religion that wanted to protect people from harm, ensure peace, and promote honesty. Being a “Muslim” was also very fluid. When I asked “What is your religion?” and “Would you consider yourself Muslim?” most people answered ambiguously. Many cited that they did not attend the mosque at all and only kept a loose association with the faith for major events like funerals and marriages. Even so, parents still continued to give their children two names –one in Chinese and the other in Arabic. Furthermore, every minority I talked to refused to eat food that was not prepared by a Muslim or according to Muslim standards. This notion of the centrality of food to ethnic, cultural, and religious identity is something I hope to research and expand upon in my comps next term. ■

Off Campus:

Περιμενε, και Θα Ερθει:

“WAIT, AND SHE WILL COME”



By Sophia Paraschos '07

Two days before the celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary at the church of the Panagia Megalohari, the line to get into the church was already wrapped well around the courtyard, and the August heat made the wait oppressive. Surrounded by sweating, impatient, frustrated old Greek

grandmothers and gypsies (who were not getting along), this first leg of this sacred journey seemed quite the opposite of spiritual.

The mass pushed forward under the watchful eyes and elbows of ruthless Greek grandmothers yelling “Prochora!” (“forward!”). The only pilgrims who push through the line unimpeded are those on their knees;

who, having made it this far, have earned the respect even of the old ladies, whatever their ethnicity. As the faithful, chaotic mass approaches the icon, the background liturgy is almost completely upstaged. The icon itself, I was surprised to find, is barely visible to the pilgrims who have traveled at great cost to beg for its healing. It is covered in a thick smattering of jewels and precious metals, which makes it impossible to verify the rumor that it is the depiction of a dark-skinned Virgin that draws the high attendance of gypsies.

After kissing the icon, people chaotically grab candles and flasks of holy oil by the fistful, lighting each candle with a different person or purpose in mind. Almost as soon

as they are lit, the candles are removed by church attendants and urgently replaced with newly dedicated candles and prayers. Gypsy women with scraped, bleeding knees and palms, their spiritual journey completed, now stand chatting or loudly chiding their children. Other pilgrims sit in quiet reflection, and many become emotional.

The night of the 14th is marked by the important *olonichtia* (all night) service in which the Virgin often appears miraculously in her bell-tower to acknowledge the devotion of the faithful. The line of people continues to snake through the church, but with none of the hysteria of the afternoon. The churchyard is surprisingly quiet despite

the hundreds of gypsies camped inside its walls, and the anticipation of the divine appearance is palpable. Gypsy children sleep peacefully under colorful blankets, and all eyes face the bell-tower, waiting for the climactic moment at which one pilgrim’s

shrill cry will indicate the arrival of the Virgin.

Two gypsy women explained this process to me as we waited and watched, refuting my cynicism with their persuasive piety: “Perimene, kai tha erthei” (“wait and she will come”), they repeated with baffling certainty. Chuckling at my skeptical American friend, I was sternly reprimanded by another gypsy woman who demanded to know why I was laughing. I urgently insisted that my friend was just tired, and that surely I too was expecting the miracle. Intoxicated by the mystical atmosphere and surrounded by devoted, unquestioning pilgrims, I can’t say I was lying. ■

Two gypsy women refuted my cynicism with persuasive piety: “Perimene, kai tha erthei” - wait and she will come.

FALL '06 SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Prof. Anne Patrick

- Liberation Theologies
- Bioethics: Christian Approaches

Prof. Roger Jackson

- Religions of South Asia
- Indian Philosophy

Prof. Michael McNally

- Introduction to Religion
- Native American Religions

Prof. Shazad Bashir

- The Sacred Body
- God, Lovesickness, and Wine

Prof. Louis Newman

- Anatomy of Evil
- Introduction to Religion

Prof. Clarke Hudson

- Daoism

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