

# History Happenings

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# Letter from the Chair

By Dr. Aram Goudsouzian

A perk of serving as department chair is that you meet all sorts of interesting and kind people. One of these people is Taylor Richardson, who graduated from what was then Memphis State University with a B.A. in History in 1962. Taylor went on to a very successful career with several Fortune 500 companies in the pharmaceutical equipment industry.

Taylor will be the first to tell you about how his education in history fed his success. He learned how to think critically, how to reason his way through a lot of information, how to appreciate the peoples and cultures around him, and how to communicate effectively. He and his wife Mary Beth are great friends to the university, with a particular commitment to students, and their scholarships have made college possible for countless students.

The Richardsons' gift also made possible the transformation of a decrepit, cubicle-infested space in Mitchell Hall into the beautiful new History Educational Resource Center (the HERC). You can read more about the HERC in the pages that follow, but I can tell you that it is central to the mission of our department. We want our students to be part of a community of historians, to get the necessary support they need to succeed in our classes, and to get some guidance on opportunities beyond the university.

As we adapt to the challenges facing the University of Memphis and other institutions of higher education, I'm grateful to work with such a talented group of teachers and scholars. We were sad to bid farewell to Peggy Caffrey and Jim Blythe, who both retired after long stints here, but we are happy to welcome Christopher Johnson and William Campbell, two young and impressive historians of African American history and early American history, respectively. They join a department that has a campus-wide reputation for working together, for innovations such as our online program, for quality teaching, and for first-class scholarship.

Did you know that one of our Egyptologists, Peter Brand, has won major grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the American Center for Research in Egypt, as well as earned a visiting appointment at a university in China? That Scott Marler's book on 19th-century New Orleans merchants won an award from the Louisiana Historical Association for the best book of 2013—or that Michelle Coffey won the same organization's prize for best



article? That Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas's book *Of Love and Other Passions: Elites, Politics and Family in Bogotá, 1778–1870* was published by the National University Press of Colombia, with an English-language translation forthcoming from the University of New Mexico Press? That Catherine Phipps's book, *Empires on the Waterfront: Japan's Ports and Power, 1858–1899*, will soon be published by Harvard University Press? That Sarah Potter won a grant for incorporating innovative "clicker" technology into her U.S. History survey course—while also publishing a major book on the postwar American family with University of Georgia Press? I can go on and on. I often do.

As historians, we care about interpreting the past, because we care about the world around us, and we want to transmit our skills to the next generation. To do this, we can learn from you. Please email me at [agoudszn@memphis.edu](mailto:agoudszn@memphis.edu) and tell me about your life since you studied history here. What paths have you taken? How did your education shape you? I'm serious, we really want to know. It will enrich us right now, and it will help us as we move forward. I look forward to hearing from you.

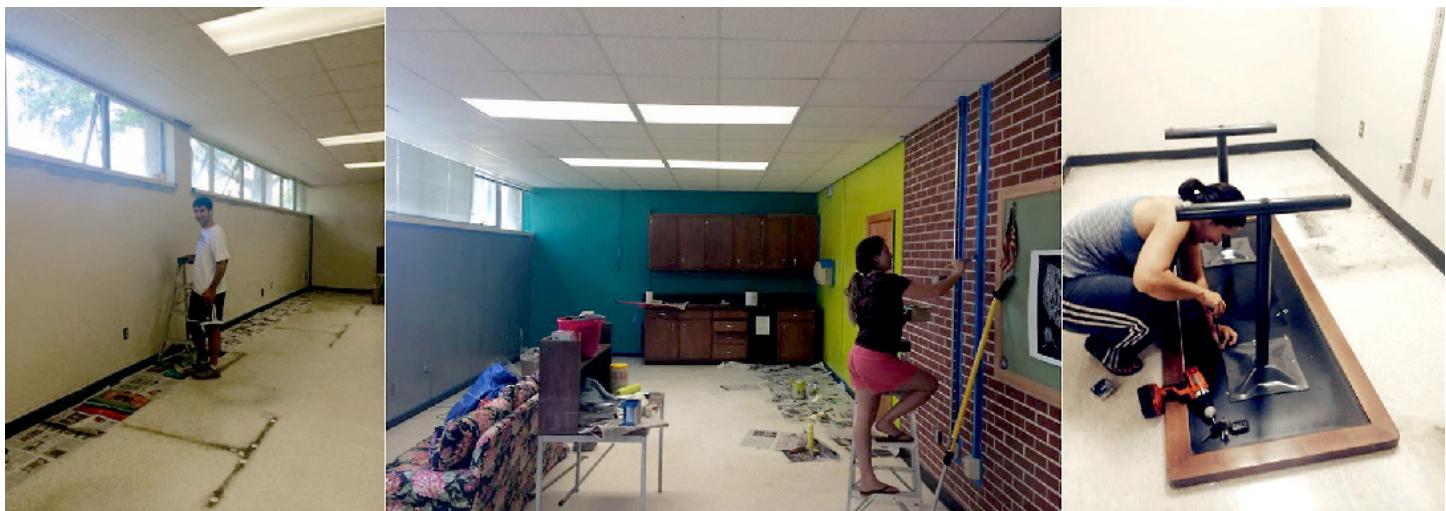
# The History Educational Resource Center (HERC)

*By Dr. Chrystal Goudsouzian*



The History Educational Resource Center has been a long time coming. One of the main tasks set to me by our former chair, Dr. Janann Sherman, was to figure out how to make our already superb undergraduate program even better for our current and future students. What did our students need to be more successful in their history courses and better prepared for their future professional lives? From these questions, and the advice of my colleagues and students, the HERC was born. It is a comprehensive advising and tutoring center for history students: a place where they can come to get academic advising, to attend an info session on internship options or stress management, to talk about future job options and graduate school, or to get comprehensive history tutoring from history instructors, graduate students, and their peers. It is a place where they can come to meet with student groups, or to study, or even just socialize with other history students.

But opening a student center doesn't happen overnight, I quickly learned. We had to have not just a vision, but a concrete plan, support, and space. Luckily, over the course of two years, with a lot of time and effort, things fell into place. Once we settled on a space, the renovations began this past May. As we cleared the room out in the summer heat and set out to paint, I started to panic at my lack of painting skills. My first question to our chair, and my husband, Aram Goudsouzian, was "Don't we have people at the university who do this?" His reply: "Yes, **you**." Fortunately, "**you**" meant "**us**." Aram, Amanda Lee Savage, and I became excellent—okay, acceptable—painters and movers. Karen Bradley facilitated logistics, and saved our butts a number of times, even that time we punched a hole in one of the walls.



Our artists, Meredith Lones and Alec McIntyre, made our space beautiful. They developed and painted our signature insignia and mural.

The HERC space and website made a soft opening on Monday, 25 August 2014, along with the first day of classes. We sat back, admired our work, and cut a makeshift ribbon to celebrate our accomplishments. But the real celebration was that Friday the 29th when our faculty, students, and generous donors, Taylor and Mary Beth Richardson, came to celebrate the opening of the HERC.

We have been happily overwhelmed with student use of the HERC so far. Our tutors are often working with two or three students at a time, and our majors seem to be enjoying getting to know one another in the comfortable space. I have gotten teary-eyed on more than one occasion watching my students introduce themselves to one another and curl up on the couch to discuss their classes or assignments. Though the HERC will provide a wide variety of academic benefits to build practical skills, at its heart it is about building community.



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# At the “Crossroad of Civilizations”

## *An Interview with Professor Andrei Znamenski*

**Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas:** This summer, you participated in the World Congress on Buddhist Studies in Vienna, Austria. Tell us about your experience.



**Andrei Znamenski:** Indeed, this August, I spent much productive time in Vienna. This was my fourth visit to the capital of Austria, and, yes, the chief goal of my trip was to take part in the International Congress on Buddhist Studies. The paper that I delivered, “Arrested Buddhism in the Altai,” concerned the dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism northward into Siberia. My particular two cents input into this theme was to argue that conventional histories on Tibetan Buddhism neglected Siberia, particularly the large area called Altai, which is located at the intersection of Mongolian, Chinese, and Russian borders. The expanded version of that paper was recently published in a French-based journal *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*. Until recently, scholars assumed the religious movement named Ak-Jang (Milk Faith) that sprang up among the indigenous people of Altai (as an anti-colonial spiritual movement against Russian colonization in the early 1900s) had nothing to do with Tibetan Buddhism. By bringing together some primary sources, images, and oral stories, I revealed that, in fact, this was an emerging local version of Tibetan Buddhism that received spiritual feedback from Mongolia.

**Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas:** Did you have a chance to attend other conference panels?

**Andrei Znamenski:** My presence at the congress also had another goal: to help some Buddhist delegates from Siberia to overcome language barriers and communicate their ideas and papers to other participants. Thus, I served as an

interpreter for a Buddhist monk-scholar from Siberia who, like me, took part in the congress (see photo on page 6). I also renewed my professional contacts with the Vienna Ethnology Museum, which possesses a large collection of Buddhist artifacts and images. In Vienna, along with these colleagues, I participated in a workshop on Tibetan Buddhist iconography organized by Dr. Orna, an art historian from Mongolia. For those who might not be familiar with the peculiarities of this iconography, I would like to point out that sacred imagery in tantric Buddhism is rich in scenes of violence and explicit sexuality. For example, some Tibetan Buddhist gods and goddesses pose with chopped heads, and trample on the bodies of defeated enemies. We also see major gods and goddesses copulating with each other. The conventional scholarly opinion is that this iconography had either come from the pre-Buddhist shamanic religion called Bon or originated from the early history of Buddhism in Tibet, which had been filled with bloody conflicts. The sexual scenes are interpreted as an exchange of male and female energy which served as a potent spiritual force of enlightenment. However, Dr. Orna has also argued that the presence of sexual scenes in Mongolian iconography in the early 20th century also had something to do with mundane purposes: to excuse the reckless behavior of Bogdo-Gegen, the head of Mongolian Buddhists, who was considered a semi-divine being and who, at the same time, was a notorious womanizer.

**Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas:** What did you do outside of the congress? After all, you spent an entire month in Europe.

**Andrei Znamenski:** Well, my summer visit to Austria was not limited to the conference halls. In addition to my participation in the congress, I used this opportunity to spend much of my time in the Vienna National Library that has abundant literature on my theme in major European languages. Since part of my training is grounded in European history, whenever I had free time, I have also tried to nourish the European and transnational part of my interests by immersing myself into local history. Historically and geographically, Vienna and Austria in general are located at the crossroad of Western European, Eastern European, and Middle Eastern civilizations. I am sure Dr. Unowsky, who is the expert on this area in our department, will vouch for me on this. The city is literally peppered with numerous sites that harbor traces of complicated relationships among those three civilizations. For a historian, it is fun to observe



how all of that historical baggage became embedded into the architecture, art, and cuisine of the city. For example, I discovered that Vienna was the site of the landmark Kahlenberg battle that took place on September 11-12, 1613. To some, this event was the peak of violent collisions which took place between Muslim and Christian civilizations in early modern history. It was a showdown between 100,000 Ottoman troops and the people of Vienna, helped by the Polish cavalry. Ironically, the Ottoman advance was assisted by local Protestant Christians, who were fighting against Viennese and Polish Catholics who were eager to squash Muslim and Protestant "heretics."

Despite the bloody past, in present-day Vienna, people of Muslim and European traditions peacefully coexist with each other. In fact, there is currently a vibrant Muslim community in the city and many Middle Eastern dishes have become part of the "traditional" cuisine in Vienna. Moreover, local lore says that this Kahlenberg battle produced not only a violent collision but also a direct cultural exchange. Polish cavalrymen, who sorted seized Ottoman supplies, wanted to pitch sacks containing strange brown seeds. Yet, one of those cavalrymen, who survived Ottoman imprisonment, prevented this from happening. Instead, he started serving, in the Turkish way, a strange but tasty energy-boosting drink made

from those brown seeds. According to the legend, that is how the coffee drinking tradition was introduced in Vienna and then it spread all over Europe.

In fact, Vienna has become quite very famous for its coffee places, which are still considered intellectual blood veins of the city. Hundreds of them pepper Vienna's landscape. Some of these coffee places have links to individuals that are widely known from European and world history courses. For example, in the 1910s, downtown Café Central was a favorite hangout for Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, who were conjuring their utopian plans of a world socialist revolution. In 1913, they were joined by Joseph Stalin, who came to Vienna to rub shoulders with the great ones. During that

very time, the same café saw another notorious "mover and shaker" named Adolph Hitler. Yet, the famous Sigmund Freud, who spent his entire life in Vienna, preferred to frequent the lesser-known Café Landtmann.



Each time when one comes to Vienna, he or she discovers something interesting. Where else can you see such places as the Museum of the Globe or the Museum of the Clock? For example, the Museum of the Globe, which samples 500+ globes, is a perfect illustration of how geographical discoveries and later explorations expanded our map knowledge.

The Museum of the Clock is a no less amazing collection of artifacts. It samples sophisticated miniature watches and wall clocks produced in Western Europe and Japan from the 1400s to the 1800s. I was surprised to find out that the other areas of the world had nothing comparable to contribute. I am sure this might sadden cultural nationalists from other civilizations, who, like my former compatriots in Russia, still feel insecure and like to think of themselves as very special and super creative.

**Guimara Dueñas-Vargas:** I see that your visits to Vienna prompted you to speculate about various civilizations and world history?

**Andrei Znamenski:** Yes, why not? One travels, compares, and makes some educated generalizations. And I will tell you more. On the surface, although my research trips to Vienna had nothing to do with Europe whatsoever, since they dealt with reading books on Asia and Siberia in different languages and with giving my paper on Tibetan Buddhism, my visits to several Vienna historical sites (for example, to Dr. Karl Lueger Plaza and to the so-called Jewish Plaza) inspired me during the last two years to write two essays that represent my vision of modernity, socialism, and nationalism. So, one might say, Vienna helped rekindle my broad transnational Eurasian interests and perspectives.

## An Egyptologist in China

By Dr. Peter Brand

In May and June I fulfilled a long-held dream, making my first trip to the People's Republic of China at the invitation of the Institute for the History of Ancient Civilizations (IHAC) in the History Department of Northeast Normal University (NENU) in the city of Changchun in the northwest part of the country. My gracious host was Professor Li Xiaodong, the senior Egyptologist in China today. I am also extremely grateful to the History Department's own resident Sinologist Dr. Yan Gao who went above and beyond the call of duty in contacting Professor Li to establish communications with the IHAC's Egyptology program and facilitate my invitation and travel arrangements every step of the way.

The Northeast Normal University's program in ancient studies goes back 30 years and has long included an Egyptological component. Since the early 1980s, a number of European and North American Egyptologists have taught at NENU, beginning with the American Egyptologist Dr. Edward Meltzer who served, in fact, as Professor Li's mentor and doctoral supervisor. Despite this regular interaction, Chinese Egyptology has remained somewhat insular, with foreign scholars teaching at NENU and some Chinese Egyptologists going abroad to study in Europe or the United States. With the financial support of the Chinese government, Chinese Egyptology is beginning to expand its presence in the larger world of Egyptology. Professor Li's extended his invitation for me to travel to China as a short-term visiting scholar to give a series of lectures at NENU and establish relations between the University of Memphis' and the IHAC's Egyptology programs and to discuss future cooperative exchanges.

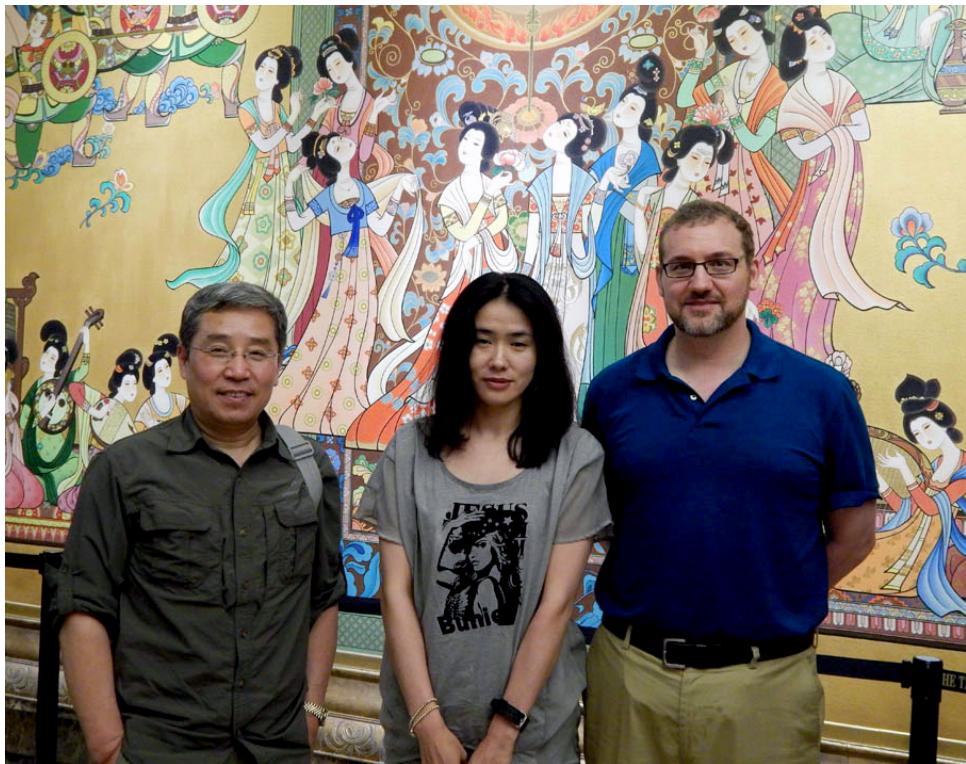
Like the Chinese concept of *yin* and *yang*, the harmonious blending of seemingly opposites, my experience of China was of dramatic contrasts. Ancient traditions and monuments blend seamlessly with ultra-modern architecture and high technology. Traditional codes of honor and social hierarchy co-exist with a



very relaxed and informal manner of social interactions and dress. I expected Professor Li to appear in a black suit and tie and worried that my sports coat and lack of a tie would seem too casual. Instead he greeted me in khaki cargo pants and a polo shirt and exclaimed at my appearance: "So very formal!" Yet Professor Li's attention as a host was anything but informal.

Indeed, I quickly became the object of what might be called "honored guest syndrome." All through the trip I was expected to take the lead, as when we walked as a group through the alleyways of Old Xi'an city in a crowded nighttime marketplace full of more restaurants than I ever saw in my life. "Honored guest syndrome" did have its embarrassments, as when young female students insisted on carrying my heavy luggage and opening car doors for me as if I were an invalid.

Each meal I ate was a banquet and I was always in the place of honor and was always expected to eat the first bite, although my hosts always ordered for me in Chinese. Often I would stall for time and enquire what something was before eating it. Invariably, everything was delicious and I hardly ever ate the same dish twice during the whole trip unless I specifically requested it. Chinese food is unlike what you will get at your local "Chinese" buffet. Rice was rarely on offer but I ate a lot of noodles and dumplings. I knew there would be no fortune cookies or sweet and sour chicken, but I must admit I was a bit shocked when they had never heard of General Tso's Chicken even though the general himself is worshiped as a minor deity.



The only familiar dish was a single serving of Kung Po chicken which was infinitely superior to anything at Wang's Mandarin House on the Highland strip!

Almost half of my three-week trip was taken up with sight-seeing. Prof. Li came down from Changchun and met me at the airport and we had coffee with Dr. Gao, who had just arrived the same afternoon with her baby girl Eva for a visit to family and to conduct research in her hometown in north-central China. After dining the first night on Beijing Duck—what else!—our first full day included a stop at the Capital Museum of Beijing, where we met his old friend the museum director and were treated to the VIP treatment, starting in a formal VIP reception room with those huge armchairs that you see in news reports about U.S. officials and diplomats visiting their

Chinese counterparts. After doing my part to improve Sino-American relations by looking honorable and sipping jasmine tea we got a guided tour of the collections. This was also an object lesson in a crucial aspect of Chinese society, the concept of *guangxi*, "connections." Professor Li had them through his personal friendships and professional connections and they literally opened doors.

Later in the afternoon we visited the Forbidden City at Tiananmen Square. After paying our respects to Chairman Mao as we entered beneath his huge portrait, the massive scale of the imperial city within a city became apparent. It makes Versailles look like a country cottage! A succession of vast courtyards and audience halls finally gave way to the inner quarters where the Emperors and their large families lived, built on a more intimate and human scale as a series of private courtyards with pavilions and gardens connected by wide alleyways. By this time it was closing and the museum staff were highly efficient at herding wayward Chinese and foreign tourists out of the Emperor's palace. After leaving we had a quick bite of that most Chinese of dishes that no Americans ever seem to eat: noodles in spicy brown sauce—that's basically "pasta," folks, at least according to the Italian descendants of Marco Polo, but every time you go to Spaghetti Warehouse you're essentially eating a Chinese dish.

After a couple of more days in Beijing where we saw the incredibly beautiful Temple of Heaven and a selection of Chinese dinosaurs in the Natural History Museum, we took one of China's ultra-modern high-speed trains on a 5 ½ hour trip to the city of Xi'an, ancient Chang'an, the capital of the Emperors from the First Emperor Shi Huang Di down through the Tang Dynasty. I wanted to see the famous terracotta army of the First Emperor's tomb complex, but I knew nothing of Xi'an itself, which turned out to be a wonder in itself. The old city with its Ming Dynasty walls and crowded marketplace alleyways was amazing. Home to a large Muslim population, we ate unique local—and halal—dishes made of wheat and lamb and beef. The first night I was treated to visits to three separate restaurants to sample all the culinary delights of Xi'an.

The main event was the Mausoleum of the First Emperor of the Chin Dynasty, which looks upon arrival to be an archaeological theme park with a giant modern statue of Chin Shi Huang Di himself. The four excavation pits and ultra-modern museum on site are well designed for the archaeologists who continue their work to this day and the priceless objects they shelter as well as convenient for the millions of mostly Chinese tourists who visit. The main pit of the thousands of foot soldiers is a vast aircraft hangar of a building and something of a wonder in its own right (see photo on the cover page of this newsletter). Xian also boasts an ultra-modern provincial museum full of artifacts dating from prehistory down to the Tang Dynasty, including excellent examples of the Terracotta Army and other objects excavated from Shi Huang Di's tomb, fabulous Shang Dynasty bronze wares, and beautiful Tang Dynasty tri-colored glazed horses, courtly figures, and camels.

My last ten days in China were in Changchun where I finally earned my keep as a lecturer giving a series of eight talks to students and faculty at the IHAC and to the general public. Students were very attentive, I was told, but they kept looking at their smart phones throughout my lectures. I found out what they were really doing when one phone said aloud a technical English word I had just used and I realized they were madly trying to keep up with what I was saying. The carefully worded and thoughtful questions they asked at the end of each session made it clear they were following the talks closely. Interestingly, most of the questions had to do with political, social, and economic issues, with very few on religious questions. Chinese society seems highly secular even as people often practice Buddhism and traditional Chinese folk religion. So when we went to a working Buddhist monastery temple in a provincial park near Changchun on the weekend, hundreds of university students had left red ribbons inscribed with prayers on a sacred tree asking the Buddha for help with their final exams. My student escorts were rather nonchalant except for one declared Christian student who would not enter the premises. All of us did go to the provincial tiger reserve, more of a zoo, really. In addition to tigers and lions and bears (oh my!), we also saw a rather tacky show, the highlight of which was a goat with a monkey on its back walking a tightrope. Dated to be sure, but we still have dog races with monkey jockeys at the Delta State Fair every year.



During my time with Professor Li we developed a great rapport and discussed the possibility of him and his students participating in my project at Karnak Temple and of having him and his students visit the U.S. I also made connections with Professor Jin Shoufu of Beijing Normal University and Dr. Ge Huipeng, a post-doctoral scholar likely to become a professor at NENU in the next few years. The academic highlight of the trip was my official appointment by the University President to a five-year visiting professorship at IHAC. I will be visiting China for a month for the next five years and hope to visit other cities in this huge country and give lectures in Beijing, Shanghai as well as in Changchun. You may have noticed I didn't say anything about a visit to the Great Wall. Well, there's always next year. *Ni Hao!*

# Gossip and Status in History

By Dr. Christine Eisel

This is my third academic year as a faculty member in the University of Memphis Department of History teaching colonial American history. My teaching here works hand-in-hand with the research I have undertaken for the last several years dealing with local and colonial legal systems in seventeenth-century Virginia.

At the November 2013 Phi Alpha Theta lecture, I presented a piece of my research. I focused on two stories involving 17th-century English men and women and the gossip they spread about and to their friends and neighbors while negotiating their way through the trials and tribulations of living in the English colonial outpost that was Virginia. I share an excerpt of that presentation with you here.



English men and women and the gossip they spread about and to their friends and neighbors while negotiating their way through the trials and tribulations of living in the English colonial outpost that was Virginia. I share an excerpt of that presentation with you here.

John and Elizabeth Nuthall went to the county court on 3 November 1651 in an effort to preserve their reputations and status. They were leaving Accomack County, Virginia, to conduct business overseas. As the twenty-three-year-old Elizabeth prepared for the couple's departure to London, John saw to some business at the county court's monthly session. John asked the court commissioners for a certificate exonerating Elizabeth from "incision, reproach, and false scandal most unwanting, cast upon her by the venomous accusations of Elizabeth ("Bess"), the wife of William Gaskins." The couple did not want any accusations spread through Bess Gaskins' ugly gossip to follow them to London, and they believed that a piece of paper from the county court commissioners had the power to minimize the power of Bess' words. With the intention of restoring Elizabeth's "reputation and known credit," the court commissioners granted the certificate to the Nuthalls, believing that Bess'

Fowre wittie Gossips disposed to be merry  
Refused muddy Ale, to drinke a cup of Sherrie.  
  
Their Husband did their Indemnity send  
Strong Ale was left who did intend  
To try it.  
  
Their Wives except to every man  
this Sacke is full and no man can  
dry it.  
  
To the tune of the Mother begildle the Daugther.



Their Husband did their Indemnity send  
Strong Ale was left who did intend  
To try it.  
  
Theire Wives except to every man  
this Sacke is full and no man can  
dry it.  
  
To the tune of the Mother begildle the Daugther.

They are but Clowns and haue not know  
the qualitie of Sherrie.  
What if we can no longer gay,  
then Ale or Beer, or Perry:  
What bestrides gods greatest heire  
from whence late before prented,  
Was what is sent to Egypt as Wine  
their ignorance prented.  
We will not depart, &c.

She let the health gas comprehend,  
this way we will take our pleasure:  
Our husbands were all right all out,  
and well greate honest by nature &  
So dronk they late in the evenynge,  
but fewe for all cold weather &  
Sat drinking lat in spacie our saloon,  
Then dronk moret alreadie,  
We will not depart &c.

One bairnes bairnes alreadie small bairn,  
Whilke twill the next moringe:  
Untill we haue all our chafe,  
They lefft night feare the hoolies:  
But ioy see they thare the commones,  
Whiche bring theis to leathern?  
Our vther bairns thare money (pounds  
In lacke a pence to be halfeare,  
We will not depart &c.

Our leas haue lasses alreadie  
and whiche we will dronk it,  
In great alfeache we will beginne,  
A health to all men haue bairns  
After man bytche haue bairns  
that come of Wallies  
Now all night eth haue the gate,  
Dronk the dronk moret,  
We will not depart &c.

Our little ones our bairns alreadie  
at starre theire abiding,  
Whiche haue lassha haue the gate  
whiche paines that haue bairns:

The second part. To the same tune.



They are but Clowns and haue not know  
the qualitie of Sherrie.  
What if we can no longer gay,  
then Ale or Beer, or Perry:  
What bestrides gods greatest heire  
from whence late before prented,  
Was what is sent to Egypt as Wine  
their ignorance prented.  
We will not depart &c.

Shake me merrily to bawmey,  
merry come in style of bartier,  
Then lat in spacie and ten times more  
though the night late ayre early.  
Our bairns haue no lefft to spide  
one shilling late to lefthit  
But shifft bytche dronk they spide  
as alreadie alreadie,  
We will not depart &c.

Our bairns bairnes alreadie small bairn,  
Whilke twill the next moringe:  
Untill we haue all our chafe,  
They lefft night feare the hoolies:  
But ioy see they thare the commones,  
Whiche bring theis to leathern?  
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Whiche bring theis to leathern?  
Our vther bairns thare money (pounds  
In lacke a pence to be halfeare,  
We will not depart &c.

Helping the combabell alreadie  
the chaff the mace alreadie  
Dronk the dronk moret



To the health was a cader  
Then is the Drinker for bairns  
in bairns he was the shore,  
Elizabeth Quilts quicke to bairns is all  
before a quarrelage:  
We will not depart &c.

Our bairns bairnes alreadie  
and whiche we will dronk it,  
And halfe haue your pice of bairns,  
Well prop him to a bairns,  
Our bairns haue no lefft to spide  
bairns twill goe together,  
as the bairns are gae with bairns  
All bairns lat the bairns,  
Then will we depa.

But when the bairns are all told,  
get some bairns but needles,  
that bairns all night haue fit  
the bairns haue their bairns  
bairns twill goe together,  
as the bairns are gae with bairns  
All bairns lat the bairns,  
Then will we depa.

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gossip had the potential to “enlarge tertiary to the tenth” should the gossip spread to London. Clearly, the court commissioners believed that even the Atlantic Ocean was not large enough to drown nasty rumors from Virginia unless the commissioners documented their official judgment that the rumors were false.



John and Elizabeth Nuthall worried that Bess Gaskins' scandalous gossip would greatly damage Elizabeth's reputation. Sometime during the previous summer, Bess claimed, she had pulled her husband, William, out of Elizabeth's bed. In the months of August and September, this bit of gossip spread throughout their neighborhood. Frances Morgan, one of the Gaskins' neighbors, stated that while in the Gaskins' home she heard Bess “in an exclaiming manner” say she had taken her husband “out of the naked bed from Mrs. Nuthall.” Frances cautioned Bess to hold her tongue. “For shame that was a very lie,” she told Bess, but Bess replied that Frances was mistaken and Elizabeth Nuthall was a “whore.” Another female neighbor also claimed to have heard Bess say that Elizabeth had bedded Bess’ husband. The court commissioners did not look favorably on Bess Gaskins; they sentenced her to 20 lashes on her bare shoulders and to make a public confession to the church congregation on the following Sabbath.

The clerk documented in the Accomack County records the problems between the Nuthalls and the Gaskins. A careful examination of records such as those surrounding John Nuthall’s petition reveals the manner in which county commissioners viewed women’s gossip; their treatment of women’s gossip reveals these Englishmen’s concern with status; and the gossip itself was one strategy that people of lower social status employed to challenge “elites” who, they claimed, had behaved badly.

The court commissioners took this matter very seriously. They recorded no less than fifteen depositions that shed light on this case. A number of Accomack County residents rallied around Elizabeth Nuthall in order to protect her reputation.

The number of depositions recorded also indicates the degree to which the Nuthalls’ were concerned with protecting their reputations. They were effectively rebutting the accusations contained within Bess Gaskins’ gossip in the most public of colonial Virginia’s spaces, a strategy employed by many plaintiffs and defendants alike. In this case the court did not find Bess Gaskins’ tale credible; she was taken to task for the gossip. In their decision, the commissioners found Elizabeth Nuthall more credible than Bess Gaskins. They also were concerned with the disorder this type of gossip had the potential for creating. The court punished Bess Gaskins and her husband for their disorderly behavior, a threat to the harmony of their neighborhoods, and to the county. The commissioners effectively protected the sexual reputation of Elizabeth Nuthall, something of a feat considering the difficulty colonial women often faced in protecting their own reputations. The court also found Williams Gaskins to be ultimately responsible for his wife’s words, subjecting him to the lash, too. As the expected patriarch of the household, it was William’s responsibility to control his wife’s behavior, and by his own admission, he could not.

This case illustrates important points about early Virginia society. First, it clearly affirms that reputations and status were



essential to order in the world of early Virginians; they did not hesitate to file suit against those whose words could damage them. For John Nuthall, his reputation and status in the community was linked to his wife's. By questioning Elizabeth Nuthall's sexual honesty, Bess Gaskins questioned her honesty in general; a woman's sexual honesty and overall trustworthiness were inseparable in English culture. Since a wife's dishonest behavior reflected poorly on her husband as the patriarch of the household, Bess' gossip had the power to affect John Nuthall's status in the community. Protecting his status was necessary as he carried out business in an economy that was dependent upon credit and trust.

Second, the harsh punishment doled out to the Gaskinses represents local officials' attempts at creating an English patriarchal order in Virginia. William's inability to govern his wife's tongue was a serious offense. Bess Gaskins had been a "tale-bearer and "back-biter" in the worst possible way, but, more importantly to the county commissioners, Bess' husband, William, was a poor excuse for a patriarch,

evident in his inability to control his wife's tongue. The status of the participants mattered to county court officials. William's poor patriarchal skills were evident. Bess' gossip needed to be curtailed for the good of the community, and William needed to be made an example of to ensure other husbands would control their wives.

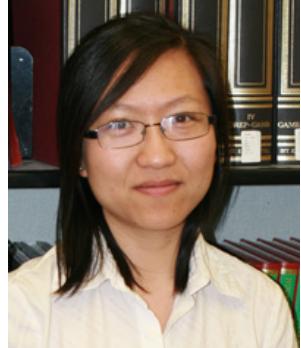
My hope is that this case (which is actually a bit more complicated than presented here) as part of a larger body of work on seventeenth-century gossip and legal systems, helps illuminate for us Virginia's English immigrants' understanding of and concern with social hierarchy. Identifying status was essential to creating and maintaining order. They were preoccupied with notions of an orderly world based on hierarchy, and their place in it. With status came power. On one hand, Virginians were willing to challenge those who did not deserve their status. On the other, elites were willing to wield their power and authority to maintain the orderly society they envisioned.

## Water, Land, and Society in Hankow

By Dr. Yan Gao

When I was asked by Professor Dueñas-Vargas to write an article for the newsletter, I was very flattered, because I was a newcomer, and more because I felt being offered a great opportunity to introduce my own research to the department. As many others have done, I am telling my story here.

Growing up in a farm town reclaimed from wetlands, I had developed a deep interest in how land and water defined the living environment of people. I still remember the big area of land behind my childhood apartment building, where a group of friends usually had a flying-kite competition in the spring. The farm town expanded quickly and eventually the municipal government which oversaw the town decided to convert the hundreds of acres of land into an apartment complex.



I was so disappointed that the land would be gone and I tried my best to change the fate of the land—writing to the mayor and asking him to pledge not to convert the land into apartments. The letter unsurprisingly attracted no attention and no reply, and I saw from my own bedroom the rising of a big apartment complex within the next two years.



By the time I entered college, the farm town had undergone drastic changes, but my interest in investigating the history of land and water stayed. I did my undergraduate study in World History. Among the readings I did in those days, two

historians influenced me the most; one is Dr. Ping-ti Ho, and the other is Dr. William T. Rowe. Dr. Ping-ti Ho grew up in China. He was able to win a scholarship to study in the U. S. during World War II and became one of the most renowned historians in China studies. His book *Studies of the Population, 1368-1953* (1959) has been one of the classics in the field of economic and social history of early modern China. Scholars in China had been fascinated by the way he redefined key

fiscal concepts such as the *ding* (adult male) and the *mou* (Chinese acre), thus prompting a revision of all previous efforts of reconstruction of China's historical population and land problems. Dr. William T. Rowe's books *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796–1889* (1984) and *Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796–1895* (1989) focus on the city of Hankow from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. By examining the city's guilds, merchant organizations, and voluntary associations, he challenged the misconception of Chinese city being "feudal," or lacking in the elements to transform into industrialized, self-governed, capitalist places. I was intrigued—how can the history of my native city be written so intricately by a non-Chinese? This is where I started my own investigation of the region, its geography, and its socio-economic transformations, but my focus would be the vast hinterland of the city, not the city per se.

I was fortunate to be admitted to Carnegie Mellon University to pursue my doctoral studies under the supervision of Professor Donald Sutton. When I was doing my coursework I did several projects including one on the Three Gorges Dam and one on water disputes in late imperial China, which eventually led me to the field of Chinese environmental history. Water is intertwined with Chinese history. From the onset of the Chinese civilization, the story of the Great Yu (Da Yu) had informed us about the great flood and the sage man and leader coping with the flood. As many scholars have realized, the study of water control is essential to understanding the mechanism of the state-society relationships in Chinese history. Work in the field is copious, and we have seen several paradigm shifts, for example, from the foundational but much criticized model of "Oriental Despotism" by Karl Wittfogel to Balinese Geertzian or Stephen Lansing's idea of "democratic irrigation model" of power resting in local social organizations. My primary focus is in the hydraulic communities (the *yuan* in Chinese) of the mid-Yangzi region. I asked the following questions: Where did they originate? How were they changing? What can be inferred about the socio-economic mechanism of state-society relationship from the developmental trajectory of those hydraulic communities? And what do we know about water control in other areas of China by studying this particular type of construction? The final product of my attempt to answer those questions is my dissertation, "Transforming the Water Regime: State, Society and Environment in the Jianghan Plain of Late Imperial and Modern China" (2012).

I did my field work in Hunan and Hubei provinces, at the confluence area between the Yangzi River and the Han River, the biggest tributary river of the Yangzi. For a period of three months, I dug in the archives and walked around the region to get a sense of the communities. I was accompanied by my friends Dr. Luo Dufang and Dr. Xu Bin, both active scholars in China's economic and social history, while researching in those communities. One of the big achievements of this trip was to find a set of rare tax records, which potentially cast light on the issue of how hydraulic communities defined the taxation of late-nineteenth-century Central China. The interpretation of these records is difficult and I was able to use some of the records in my dissertation. Dr. Xu at Wuhan University and Dr. Lu Xiqi at Xiamen University are continuously training students to investigate the history of water, land, and taxation through those records.

What I found out from the research trip as well as from the local gazetteers is that the hydraulic communities were confined, limited, and individualized. Each community had and has its own cultural identity, and each created a syncretic field for the peoples' community. Temple construction was an indication of such consolidation. In the area I walked through, many temples had existed in the historical records, but were mostly destroyed by bandits, wars, and natural disasters. The temples in the area now have been reconstructed in the recent five to ten years and are hosting a variety of gods and goddesses, mainly, to fend off natural disasters (mainly floods and droughts) and nuisances (e.g., mosquitos and flies). In a disaster-prone area, the shared experience among people in a certain community to defend themselves from disasters helped to create cultural practices that consolidated individual hydraulic communities. More work needs to be done to identify how the individual hydraulic communities networked among themselves and how the network of hydraulic communities was integrated into the market system in the region. The photo above of me is taken outside a newly reconstructed temple of eighteen water deities, Nanmu Temple in Jianli County of Hubei Province.



My interest extended as my research went further in depth. When I was reading one gazetteer of the Qing garrison of Hubei, I came across one piece describing a conflict over the land on the floodplain between the Qing banner army (ruling class; ethnically Manchus and Mongols) and the Han peasants. This case led me to look into how ethnicities and water/land resource management interacted during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This resulted in one of my articles on the Qing government's land reclamation policy and how the Manchu ethnic identity was shaped and reshaped by the governmental policies on land, water, and people (especially the Hans). The more I delved into the materials, the more I

found a new perspective to retell the major events of Qing history. By moving away from the traditional cultural and social history, adding an environmental dimension into the analysis does give us interesting moments to discover some "hidden" aspects of the history. I am hoping that, by revising my dissertation to a book manuscript, I will reveal more of the "hidden" stories not only to the academics, but also to a broader audience, so that more interest and discourses will be raised among people on the history of water and land, and in general East Asian environment history.



historic building Baker Hall. Every time when I pulled myself out of piles of books and materials, walked out of the office and looked upward, I would see Andrew Carnegie's words engraved on the ceiling dome (see the photo, left), "My heart is in the work." This creed has been engraved in my heart as well.

## *Pregnancy and Childbirth in Ancient Egypt*

By Dr. Chrystal Goudsouzian

A vibrant community of scholars and teachers has worked together to revitalize Women's History Month during the past few years here on the U of M campus. We have brought in exciting lecturers, incorporated student groups and community members, and started a new campus-wide writing project.

The Department of History has been at the center of this transformation. Check us out here after the opening ceremony—those shirts say, "This is What a Feminist Looks Like!"

As part of this year's slate of events, I gave a talk to colleagues, students, and community members on contraception, pregnancy, and childbirth in ancient Egypt. The lecture, "The Perils of Pregnancy," was meant to highlight interesting information on conception and pregnancy from ancient Egypt, and also allow me the opportunity to share my own approach to accessing ancient reproductive life. I hoped our interactive discussion on the ancient world would open up the participants to talking with the student groups and health care workers armed at the door with information on modern contraception and reproductive health as they headed out of the lecture hall.



I began my lecture by discussing modern conception and pregnancy to get people thinking about giving birth in the distant past. Being pregnant and giving birth is scary. Even for those lucky enough to have access to comprehensive medical care—doctors, hospitals, fetal testing, and imaging—there are still a number of unknowns. When will the baby be born? How long will labor last? How painful will it be? Will both the mother and child make it through in good health? I asked my

audience to try to imagine those unknowns 3,000–4,000 years ago, when half of the children born did not reach the age of five and many women died in childbirth or suffered from childbirth-related injuries and infections.

Compared to the people in the audience, the ancient Egyptians lived in a world full of unknowns. But they wouldn't have seen it this way. The Egyptians lived in a physical world that was inhabited by people and animals just like ours, but they also believed that spirits, demons, and gods could also visit their world to help, watch, or harm. Given those real-world dangers of pregnancy and childbirth for families, a complex set of beliefs and practices surrounded the time of gestation and childbirth. Unfortunately, due to a strong cultural avoidance to discussing women and infants in these liminal states, we have only fragmentary evidence of these beliefs and practices.

For example, if we believed the literature and depictions of the ancient Egyptians, every pregnant woman gave birth to a healthy male child—and she never looked more than a few months pregnant! The sources leave us with more questions than answers. Where is the context? The structure? The belief system? How do we contextualize these sources into a larger framework of belief and action? How do we gain a working picture of ancient Egyptian reproductive lives?

This is something that I struggled with...for years. It turned out that the answer was just under my nose. If you think about ancient Egypt, what do you think about it? Pyramids, sarcophagi, mummies—the afterlife. How did one get to the afterlife? Rebirth. The Egyptians had to be reborn! So, in a culture that fears pregnancy and birth, or at least refrains from referencing

it in the physical world, but believes it is necessary to be physically reborn into the afterlife, where might we find information about birth? Tombs. More specifically—funerary texts.

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored cardigan over a teal top, standing in front of a whiteboard and a large projection screen. She is gesturing with her hands as she speaks. The projection screen displays a blue illustration of a pregnant woman and the text "THE PERILS OF PREGNANCY".

Beginning with the Pyramid Texts inscribed in the pyramids of the late Old Kingdom, Egyptians took texts with them to the grave that were believed to have magical power to help individuals reach the afterlife. These included Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, and The Book of the Dead. Though access to these texts varied over time, they were composed to help individuals access the afterlife. Part of this journey was being reborn, and rebirth was often envisioned as and modeled off real world understandings of childbirth.

But how do you bear children safely? You need the gods. Myths, which were a central part of the funerary texts,

tell the stories of the gods, helping to animate spells of rebirth. Now, I'd love to tell you that the funerary texts and the myths they reference are logical and easy to read, like a story, like the Greek myths you may be familiar with. They're not. Specific spells were chosen for specific reasons, and they reference myths and beliefs in part. But we can pull from these specific episodes—their tone, their language, their treatment of birth and rebirth—to begin to reconstruct cultural conceptions of rebirth, and by extension pregnancy and childbirth.

I'm not saying mythic events perfectly mirror beliefs and experiences from the physical world, or that physical events were completely mirrored on myth. What I am saying is that we can use mythic stories, which we mainly access from funerary texts, to gain insight into the way that the Egyptians thought about pregnancy and childbirth. These texts not only help us frame our story of Egyptian reproduction, but also did the same for the Egyptians. Although we access these myths through funerary texts, these myths were part of a larger oral culture and tradition that the Egyptians knew and used to help understand their world.

This is not an exact science. In fact, no myth is even close to the experience of any specific Egyptian woman. What analyzing funerary texts allows us to do is create a collection of some of the myths and beliefs that the Egyptians believed about the births of the gods, which likely animated and gave meaning to the experiences of women and families who were hoping to manage pregnancy and childbirth.

# Mental Illness and Healing

By Dr. Beverly Tsacoyanis

On December 19, 2013, I had the pleasure of presenting research from my dissertation in the workshop environment



of the History of Medicine and Psychiatry colloquium series directed by Harvard Medical School's David Satin, M.D. The workshop series, held in the Countway Library of Medicine in Boston, Massachusetts, gives graduate students, historians, researchers, and practicing physicians a space to discuss illness and healing beyond the borders of

our disciplines. I titled my talk "Good Spirits and Strong Bodies: Mental Health Treatment in Lebanon and Syria, 1899 to 1961" and benefitted from workshop participants' feedback that has helped me develop my book manuscript. In April 2014 I successfully defended my dissertation, and my current book project supplements this material with data and analysis relevant to trauma, conflict, and the spread of biomedical practices among Muslim, Christian, and Jewish Middle Eastern communities with spirit-based understandings of illness.

My talk at the Harvard Medical School workshop focused on my dissertation research, which was based in part on medical, ethnographic, and historical sources I accessed in government and private collections in Damascus. I left Syria in the summer of 2010 and have not been back since then. The devastating humanitarian crisis in Syria right now as a result of a bloody civil war has immediate roots in (the ill-fitting term) the Arab Spring, and longer roots reaching back into the years on which my dissertation focuses, the late Ottoman Empire, the French Mandate, and the early post-colonial Syrian state. The war has made healthcare provision virtually impossible at both emergency and preventive medicine levels, and has hastened a polio outbreak in the northeastern province of Dayr al-Zur that spread to Lebanon and Israel. I learned a few months ago that the public mental hospital in Douma where I had collected some of my data was destroyed from regime bombing. Many staff escaped after pro-regime and anti-regime forces threatened their lives, and few people remain in Syria with formal training in psychology, psychiatry, and related fields. Some Syrians will seek out such healers to cope with their immensely painful losses. Some may turn to other healers instead of or in addition to psychiatrists. My research explains why non-psychiatric forms of healing

were popular for decades, even as psychiatric concepts and practices had made inroads in Beirut and Damascus.

The field of mental illness and healing in the 1900s reveals a great diversity of healing experiences in the Eastern Mediterranean. While there were two well-known and biomedical-oriented psychiatric mental hospitals near Beirut and Damascus (the Lebanon Hospital and Ibn Sina Hospital, respectively—Ibn Sina Hospital is pictured below)



most ordinary people in the early and mid-twentieth century preferred to turn to local practices that imbued healing with religiously and culturally significant meaning. I found this to be the case in Christian and Jewish as well as Muslim communities in Lebanon and Syria.

As I mentioned at the Harvard talk, one of the main hospitals in my analysis is the hospital founded in 1899 near Beirut (and closed in 1982 during the Lebanese Civil War, after Israeli bombing on the hospital's new location) known as the Lebanon Hospital for the Insane at Asfouriyeh. The hospital was supported in part by the French Mandate (and later, the Lebanese) governments, but largely by charitable donations from various Christian missionary groups in Europe and North America. The Lebanon Hospital kept a committee and board of trustees in London for much of the time it existed, and many of their records are now housed in the archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. In the hospital's 1908 annual report (parts of which are also available online thanks to the Saab Medical Library at the American University in Beirut) Dr. Harry Thwaites, then-medical superintendent, noted that their hospital had "an

important educational function to perform: it has to teach that insanity is physical disease, and is no more attributed to supernatural agencies than rheumatism, gout, or typhoid fever." The problem with his thinking was that rheumatism and fever could be the result of evil-eye sickness and spirit possessions too, according to the beliefs of many people in the area.

Unfortunately for these doctors, many of whom were intimately connected to French or British imperial and colonial projects in the region, their persistence in making proselytizing a goal of the hospital ultimately cast suspicion on their self-professed noble aims to advance an apolitical medical system and spread the practice of psychiatry throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. They conflated their definition of modernity with biomedical psychiatry, but they also conflated modernity with Western forms of Christianity. Much like elites in other parts of the world, colonial psychiatrists and politicians in the Middle East and North Africa justified ethnic, racial, class, and gendered difference in ways that supported their own worldviews. These acts ultimately drew various forms of resistance from local communities, some of whom saw modern medicine as

ineffective for local understandings of mental illness, and others of whom saw the hospital's Protestant proselytizing as inherently colonial and against the larger goals of local non-Protestant (particularly Catholic) communities in early and mid-twentieth century Lebanon.

There are numerous other examples I can draw from documents about healing in the Eastern Mediterranean, but space permits only these few. As historians, we need to take cultural and religious practices seriously if we want to really understand why certain beliefs persisted in the twentieth century even as governments adopted biomedical approaches to health and illness. Traveling to Boston and presenting my work to physicians and medical historians (some of whom had personal and professional connections to medical and religious organizations I mention in my research) was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. For information about other events in the Harvard series, and about related past and upcoming exhibits and events at the Countway Library's Center for the History of Medicine, see their Past Events pages available at <https://www.countway.harvard.edu/menuNavigation/chom/exhibit/pastevents.html>.

## *Welcome to our New Faculty Members*

### **Professor Christopher Johnson**

When he was a kid, Chris Johnson was transplanted from New York City to Burkville, Alabama—a small place between Selma and Montgomery. His grandparents were from Alabama, and migrated to Harlem, where they started their family. One by one, their children and grandchildren followed them back south in the 1990s. Growing up in Lowndes County, Chris learned from the stories of elders about the Lowndes County Freedom Movement, the first Black Panther party, narratives that were not—then at least—in many history books. As a teenager, Chris



was convinced that the South was hateful and hypocritical and oppressive. Seeking escape, he went north—to Vassar

### **Professor William J. Campbell**

Before I arrived at the University of Memphis, I lived in San Francisco and taught history in the California State University system. Prior to that, after completing my Ph.D. (2007) in early North American history at McMaster University, I taught at McGill University in Montreal. While having completed my graduate studies in the area I was born and raised (southern Ontario, Canada), I have been fortunate to have previously lived abroad on a number of occasions, and now in another region of the U.S. And so far, the city of Memphis, the university, the student body, and my colleagues, have all been wonderfully inviting. That being said, I do miss surfing and wish we, instead of



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*(Johnson, continued)*

College in Poughkeepsie, New York. There, he quickly discovered that the hallowed North was far from the utopia he was seeking. He learned to recognize hate and hypocrisy and oppression cloaked in liberal progressive clothes. Meanwhile, the South had never let him go. After seasonal migrations back to family in Alabama, Chris felt pangs of separation from the pastures he'd once considered dull, scratchy, and a haven for venomous things. The humidity was nourishing and sweet, the taste of bread. And he was even more stirred and inspired by the narratives of elders. Since he surrendered to that muse, the Deep South—and the Deeper South of the Caribbean—has continued to inspire his creative pursuits—scholarly and otherwise.

After several long winters shoveling snow in New York, New Haven, Philadelphia, and Colorado, Chris feels happy to drink in this Memphis humidity. Chris has spent just about all of the twenty-first century living away from Burkville and the Deep South. He feels happy to return—even though proud Memphians tell him that he is now living in the mid-South. Chris arrives at the University of Memphis most recently from Colorado College, where he was a scholar in residence in the Race and Ethnic Studies Program in academic year 2013–2014. In a few months he will receive his PhD in African American studies and history from Yale University. By mapping the personal and political networks of Caribbean—principally Trinbagonian—migrant activists, his dissertation positions the long black-freedom movement in the United States within a matrix of transatlantic, interconnected struggles against sexism, racism, and poverty. The footsteps of freedom fighters have led him to Britain, Holland, France, Ghana, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago so far. He is excited to incorporate interdisciplinary, intersectional, and transnational methods into the study of black history at the University of Memphis. He looks forward to all that he will learn and build with his students.

*(Campbell, continued)*

that other Tennessee city, had the professional hockey team. Without the distraction of those two hobbies, though, I have been able to spend more time becoming un-vegetarian and familiarizing myself with local craft beers... oh, and on research and writing.

Building from earlier research on borderlands, treaties, and exchange, I am currently working on two research projects. The first is a two-year, Organization of American Historians/National Parks Service-funded study. In short, the report will document the histories, significance, and legal legacies of the land treaties that were finalized near and around the Oneida Carry (Rome, New York), c. 1730–1794. My work with the OAH and NPS will be used as the basis for my next book that will explore localized responses to empire, violence, and defeat throughout the borderlands of New France and the British colonies (c.1701–1815). The work will concentrate on the evolution of treaty protocol and “Indian policy,” as well as trade and kinship ties, in an attempt to underscore the agency and motivations of indigenous negotiators and their European counterparts.