

History Happenings

A newsletter published by the Department of History

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS
Dreamers. Thinkers. Doers.

From the Chair

The University of Memphis Centennial Celebration has begun! Many activities on the part of the campus community are organized around the institution's history. Dr. Bond and I published a coffee-table book this fall, called *Dreamers. Thinkers. Doers: A Centennial History of the University of Memphis*—more about this elsewhere in the newsletter.

The Centennial Kick-Off Concert at the Cannon Center, for example, featured an original composition called “Presidential Portraits.” Projected behind the orchestra onto a big screen were photographs of students and their activities, along with the presidents, over the 100-year history of the institution. Another historic centennial event was the unveiling of a historical marker on the site of the original Normal Depot. Completed just in time for the opening of the West Tennessee Normal School in 1912, the station stood for forty years beside the Southern railroad tracks, handling passengers and freight for the school. It was also the disembarkation site during World War II for hundreds of wounded soldiers on their way to the Kennedy Army Hospital located on Park and Getwell, now our South Campus.

Upcoming centennial events include concerts, conferences, banquets, reunions and workshops. The university has a full calendar of centennial events on the webpage: <http://memphis.edu/centennial>

I'd like to draw your attention to 100 Years, 100 Women. Co-sponsored by the Center for Research on Women, African and African-American Studies and the History Department, the culminating event will be a banquet on April 27, 2012, where we will recognize 100 women who have made a difference at the university. We are now soliciting nominations, a 250-word essay detailing the person's contribution to the University of Memphis and why she deserves to be selected. Nominees do not need to be students or alums of the university. Nominations are due by December 31, 2011, and can be made on the website: <http://memphis.edu/women>

Coming soon is the prestigious [13th Annual Graduate Association for African-American History Conference](#) on November 9-11, 2011. This conference attracts presentations from top graduate students from around the nation and several foreign countries. This year's conference will feature a

keynote address from Dr. Peniel Joseph, professor of history at Tufts University and the author of the award-winning *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*. Professors from area institutions will serve as panel commentators and participate in a workshop on professional development and the job market.



If you are an alum of our department, I'd love to hear from you. I am currently compiling a list of our past students and their current occupations. We'll call it “Where Are They Now?” and publish it on our website. Please email your information (name, date graduated, current employment) to me at sherman@memphis.edu

The Department of History is a vibrant and intellectually stimulating place to work and study. I invite all readers of this newsletter to participate in our functions, sign up for a class, or just drop by for a visit. You are always welcome in Mitchell Hall.

Janann Sherman

The Capital of Happiness

By Dennis Laumann



A typical street scene in the historic center of Salvador, with the Casa de Nigeria on the left

This past August I visited Salvador, Brazil's "Capital of Happiness," a beautiful, cosmopolitan, dynamic, and historic city along the Atlantic coast. Founded in 1549, Salvador was Brazil's first capital until 1763 and today it is the country's third largest city as well as the capital of the state of Bahia. Most importantly for me, Salvador is the center of Afro-Brazilian history and culture and the destination of a study abroad program I will lead in the spring 2012 semester.

As a specialist in African history, I certainly felt at "home" in this Brazilian city, where the sights, sounds, and smells reminded me of Ghana, the West African country that is the focus of my scholarship. And though I have traveled to many

other parts of the African diaspora, such as Cuba and other island nations in the Caribbean, I was struck by the predominance of African influences in Salvador. Indeed, when Brazilian colleagues asked me how Salvador differed from Ghana, I only half-jokingly replied that Salvador was more African than Africa!

To students of Atlantic world history, the reasons for the prevalence of African culture in Salvador are obvious. Brazil was the recipient of the largest number of slaves from Africa, at least three million, during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Most of these enslaved Africans originated from present-day Nigeria in West Africa and Angola in central Africa. Northeastern Brazil, which includes Bahia, had the highest concentration of Africans within Brazil, many of whom worked on sugarcane and tobacco plantations. In contrast to the United States, manumission from slavery was relatively easier, so a significant population of "free" Africans resided in Salvador and other urban centers during the slavery era. Additionally, many Africans liberated themselves through rebellion and recreated African communities in the hinterlands known in Brazilian history as quilombos. All these factors — the large slave population, substantial numbers of free Africans, and the existence of autonomous African communities — explain the perseverance and strength of African culture in Salvador today.

Despite these deep connections with Africa, the Brazilian economic and political elite historically sought to suppress Afro-Brazilian culture and instead emphasize the country's Portuguese and Catholic heritage. This Eurocentrism was not unique to Brazil, of course, as African cultural beliefs and practices were outlawed elsewhere in the African diaspora. Afro-Brazilians nonetheless kept their traditions alive, even when they were forced to practice their religions, play their music, and perform their dances underground. Fortunately, in the past two decades or so, especially as a result of the policies of immensely popular former Brazilian president Inacio Lula da Silva, state-sanctioned discrimination against Afro-Brazilian culture has disappeared. In fact, the city of Salvador and the state of Bahia today highlight their African connections and promote local Afro-Brazilian culture in their tourism campaigns.

For this reason, in addition to its popular beaches, historic churches, and colonial architecture, Salvador is Brazil's second most popular tourist destination after Rio de Janeiro. I encountered tourists everywhere in Salvador, but particularly in Pelourinho, the historic center famous for its colorful, well-preserved homes dating back to the 17th century, which earned it a World Heritage Site declaration by UNESCO in 1985. Besides numerous Brazilian and European tourists, I came across several African American tour groups, visiting Salvador to learn more about Afro-Brazilian history and culture. Like them, I traveled there because of Salvador's reputation as one of the great cities of the African diaspora.

The primary purpose of my visit was to make arrangements for next semester's study abroad program. Next year, a select group of honors students will travel with me to Salvador through our study abroad program entitled "Afro-Brazilian History and Culture in the Capital of Happiness." The many topics we will explore in the related course include African origins; the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade; the development of the Atlantic World; slavery, resistance, and emancipation in Brazil; Afro-Brazilian religion and culture; and politics and identity in present-day Brazil. After seven weeks of readings, classroom discussions, and some lessons in basic Portuguese, we will travel to Salvador for one week of intensive, varied, and first-hand learning experiences.

Most of my August visit was devoted to setting up the Spring Break trip — meeting with faculty at the Federal University of Bahia, martial arts and dance instructors, religious figures, and tour guides. But, besides all these official duties, I had many wonderful, unexpected, and profoundly rewarding experiences. One evening, for example, when I was attending an Afro-Brazilian religious ceremony, during which the orixás (or deities) of the Candomblé religion make an appearance, I met Ayanwale Ayo Olayanju who serves as Nigeria's Cultural Ambassador to Salvador. What a pleasant surprise it was to learn that the Nigerian government not only recognizes its historic and cultural connections across the Atlantic, but considers

it so important that it maintains a Casa de Nigeria (or Nigeria House) in the heart of Salvador. During my busy days, walking around the city to various appointments, I encountered the ambassador several times, and we spoke at length about his efforts to deepen the relationship between Nigeria and Brazil. Amongst the many programs organized by the Casa de Nigeria, Brazilian students take classes in Yoruba, one of Nigeria's main languages and the basis for the singing and chanting in Candomblé ceremonies.

One of the biggest revelations for me in Salvador was the fact that Candomblé symbols are visible throughout the city. Although ceremonies are mostly held behind closed doors, in Candomblé houses called terreiros, the sight of large statues of the Orixás in a lake in the middle of a large park was startling to me, since public displays of African religions generally are rare in West Africa and the African diaspora. To learn more about Candomblé, I spent a morning visiting Cecilia Soares, the head of a Candomblé house called Ilê Axé Maruketú and a professor at the Federal University of Bahia. She explained to me

that in the past Brazilians could not openly practice Candomblé or other Afro-Brazilian religions, particularly someone like her in the academic profession. While Catholicism is the dominant religion and evangelical Christianity is spreading in Salvador, the relatively recent, official acceptance of Afro-Brazilian religions means followers are no longer forced to hide their faith. What may be especially instructive to American visitors is the fact that many residents of Salvador easily mix beliefs and practices, not just Christianity and Candomblé, but also Hinduism and other religions, a refreshing change from fundamentalism of whatever sort.

One of the most well-known manifestations of Afro-Brazilian culture is the martial arts form called Capoeira. Central African in origin, it was developed in Brazil by Africans to defend themselves from slave masters. Capoeira is a graceful mix of unarmed combat techniques, dance, and music. The official center of Capoeira is the historic Santo Antonio fortress,



Dr. Laumann with a woman dressed in traditional clothing of the colors of Xangó (or Sàngó in Yoruba), one of the Orixás of the Candomblé religion

a former prison which now houses the workshops of leading mestres (or masters). I visited Jaime Martins dos Santos, also known as Mestre Curió, an elderly man who leads one of the most famous Capoeira schools. Although visitors can see groups performing Capoeira throughout Salvador, especially in tourist areas, only the elite of Capoeira masters are provided space in the Santo Antonio fortress. Mestre Curió's path there from humble roots is documented in his autobiography which he inscribed to me with the words "Where there is water, there are flowers and happiness."

Indeed, Salvador is surrounded by water, courtesy of the Atlantic Ocean, and one of its beaches, Porto da Barra, is recognized as one of the very best in the world. I spent some time in the lively neighborhood bordering that beach to visit my friend Marcio de Abreu. Besides being a well-regarded Capoeira instructor who has led workshops in the United States and Europe and recently co-produced a documentary on Capoeira, Marcio started a clothing line called Bassula Capoeira Originals to raise awareness of the martial art. When the Memphis students visit Salvador next March, Marcio will teach them basic Capoeira moves while our mutual friend Sandra Lima will offer a workshop in Afro-Brazilian dance. These types of first-hand experiences will clearly help students better understand the history and culture they will be studying in the classroom before our trip.

African influences are not just evident in religion, dance, and music, but everywhere on the streets of Salvador. On a Saturday morning, my friend Pedro Almeida and I took a bus trip to the seaside neighborhood called Ribeira. The main reason for our trip was to visit the famous hilltop church called *Basílica do Nosso Senhor Bom Jesus do Bonfim*. People from near and far visit it to make wishes, symbolized by the colorful ribbon they tie along the church gates or on their wrist. Exploring Ribeira, I saw many sights that reminded me of West Africa. Small market stalls lined the main street where yams, okra, and other West African foods were for sale. Girls carefully balancing heavy loads of fruits and vegetables on their heads, another scene reminiscent of West Africa, passed us as we walked to the beach. There, we stopped at an informal roadside restaurant, where an Afro-Brazilian woman was cooking fried balls of black-eyed peas with ginger, called *Acaraje* in Brazil and *Kose* in Ghana. The continuities of African culture — despite slavery and discrimination and the centuries and distance, in artistic forms as well as everyday culture — are remarkable and inspirational.

On my last day in Salvador, as I was enjoying one of my favorite indulgences, an espresso, I suddenly heard the vibrant pounding of drums known as *Odolum* which some readers may recall in Paul Simon's hit song "The Obvious Child" from an album he partly recorded in Salvador in the early 1990s. I excused myself from the table and quickly headed down the street where I came upon a group of young boys playing a variety of colorful drums with enthusiasm and obvious joy. As tourists snapped their photos, I reflected on the beauty of the site before me: a new generation, diverse in their appearance and origins, playing African drums in the Capital of Happiness. I have no doubt our honors students will return to Memphis with many such beautiful experiences and wonderful stories to share with their families and friends.



School children learning about Afro-Brazilian music

Brazil continues to attract more world attention, not only because of its growing and stable economy and progressive social policies, but also since it will be hosting the next World Cup in 2014 and Summer Olympics in 2016. Hopefully these international events, which will be closely followed by humanity around the globe, will provide opportunities for more of us to learn about the remarkable and inspirational history and culture of Afro-Brazilians. Thanks to support from the Department of History, the Helen Hardin Honors Program, and the Center for International Studies and Programs, I will have the chance to teach students at The University of Memphis about this subject dear to me.

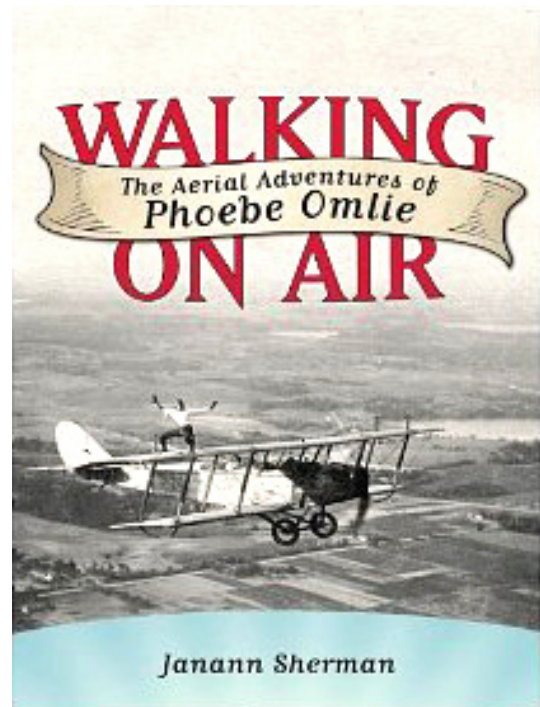
Walking on Air: The Aerial Adventures of Phoebe Omlie

Aviation pioneer Phoebe Fairgrave Omlie (1902-1975) was once one of the most famous women in America. In the 1930s, her words and photographs were splashed across the front pages of newspapers across America. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt named her among the “eleven women whose achievements make it safe to say that the world is progressing.”

Phoebe Fairgrave began her career in the early 1920s when aviation was unregulated and open to those daring enough to take it on, male or female. She started with the purchase of a World War I surplus airplane, a hired pilot, and the gumption to teach her to wing-walk, hang by her teeth from the landing gear, and parachute jump. She sold stunts to the movies to help pay for the plane. She was one of the first women to manage a barnstorming troop; hers was called the Phoebe Fairgrave Flying Circus. After she married her pilot, Vernon Omlie, the pair settled in Memphis, where they built the first airport in the area.

While Vernon ran the airport, Phoebe earned the first commercial pilot's license issued to a woman and became a successful air racer. After winning a series of major races, Eleanor Roosevelt asked Phoebe to campaign for her husband for president. During the New Deal, Phoebe became the first woman to hold an executive position in federal aeronautics.

Despite this illustrious career, Phoebe Omlie died broke and alone in a fleabag hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana, at the age of 73. She was completely forgotten; her private papers scattered to the winds.



Dr. Janann Sherman spent over ten years piecing together the story of this remarkable woman, a process she describes in her epilogue, called “Finding Phoebe.” The resulting biography is a complex portrait of a daring aviator struggling for recognition in the early days of flight and a detailed examination of how American aviation changed over the first half of the twentieth century.

Walking on Air was released by the University Press of Mississippi on September 1, 2011.

A Source of Pride

By Stephen Stein, Online Program Director

In the fall of 2008, the Department of History launched an online program that allows students to complete an undergraduate degree in history no matter where they live. At the time, it was one of only a handful of online undergraduate history programs in the country and we remain one of the few major research universities to offer a substantial number of history courses online. Course offerings range from African-American history to modern America, the history of technology, ancient history, and the Ottoman Empire. In spring 2011, we launched an online MA, which has also proven very popular with students.

Since launching three years ago, the program has grown from 50 online course enrollments to more than six hundred this semester when we offered thirteen undergraduate and two graduate courses online. Online enrollments currently account for one-seventh of the total enrollments in history courses.



Faith Babis, one of the first students to receive an online B.A. degree in history

The majority of students who enroll in online courses take a mix of online and traditional classroom courses. Online courses give them the flexibility to balance work, school, and other responsibilities. They can continue their educations despite busy schedules, health issues, or relocation. Students take our online courses from across the United States and even overseas, and their number includes members of the U.S. military deployed to Afghanistan and other locations.

A growing number of students take all their courses online. Currently, we have almost 50 students enrolled in our online BA and MA programs who take all their classes online. We receive almost daily inquiries about these programs, and recently hired two new faculty

members to help us meet the growing demand for new courses. Andrew Daily, who earned his PhD at Rutgers University, will be teaching courses in Caribbean, European, and world history. Courtney Luckhardt, a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, will be teaching courses in Medieval history. This is one of the distinguishing features of our online program. Unlike many online programs, full-time Department of History faculty teach the majority of our courses and almost all of our upper-division graduate courses.



Members of the Online Committee meeting with Dr. Janann Sherman. Left to right: Dr. Stephen Stein, Dr. Daniel Unowsky, Dr. James Blythe. (Committee member Dr. Susan O'Donovan not present for photograph)



Online Program Advisor Amanda Lee Savage teaching a student

Revenue from the program has softened the impact of recent budget cuts in higher education and allowed the department to fund new fellowships for our graduate students and support both faculty and graduate student research. This, again, stands in sharp contrast to history departments at many other universities, and has allowed us to attract superior students and promising scholars in a challenging economic environment.

The Department of History's successful online program is a model for other departments at The University of Memphis, which have begun launching online programs of their own. It places us at the forefront of college history education and helped our department win recognition by the American Historical Association as [one of the most innovative history programs in the country](#).

One Hundred Years of Drama and Comedy

By Janann Sherman

Dr. Bond and I volunteered to write a history of the university as we approached the centennial anniversary. You cannot have a centennial without a history, but such an undertaking takes time. So we began in spring 2008. Over the years, we scanned some 600 photographs at high resolution and gathered materials wherever we could: newspapers, yearbooks, published and unpublished sources. We put it all together and delivered it to the publisher on May 1, 2011.

What we discovered in our research was a rich and complex history full of drama—humor and tragedy. We decided to write the kind of book we'd like to read, full of interesting and quirky information—the kind of thing that someone reading it would think, "I didn't know that!" and want to tell a friend.

Some examples from our research that surprised us, and would likely surprise others. We didn't know:

- That the institution changed names and missions five times over its 100-year history.
- How central women were to raising the funding and lobbying for the founding of the Normal School in Memphis.



Early students of West Tennessee Normal School

- That teachers in Tennessee, prior to 1912, were not required to have a high school education. So the Normal School offered both high school and teacher-training courses.

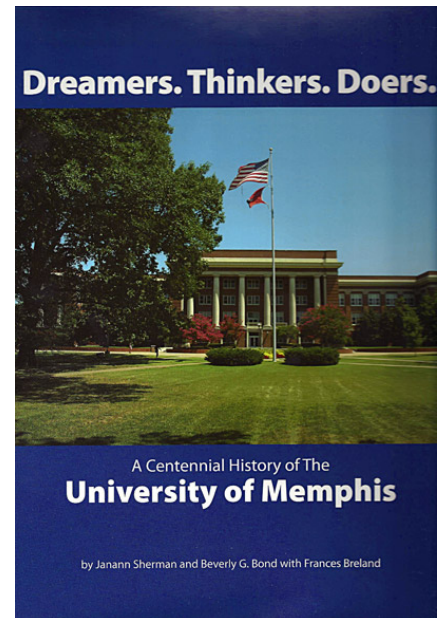
- That the administration building functioned as the sole academic and office building at the School until mid-century.

- That in the 1920s, the Normal School had a very strong agriculture program, especially under President Kincannon. There were chicken houses out behind the administration building. The school owned a herd of Holsteins, some prize Duroc swine, and was raising a colony of rabbits for food.

- That during the Depression, the state attempted, on three separate occasions, to eliminate the Teachers' College, obs. Under extreme austerity measures, faculty worked for many months at half pay which was then cut further.

- That the move for integration of Memphis State began in 1954, just after the ruling of *Brown vs. The Board of Education* that abolished separate but equal schools. It would take five years of struggle before the first eight African-American students were admitted in 1959.

- That due to the effect of the baby boomers, enrollment increased 260% during the 1960s, from less than 5,000 to over 18,000. The number of faculty increased from 200 to 725.



This 128-page, fully illustrated history of The University of Memphis by Janann Sherman, Beverly Bond, and Frances Breland was released on August 3, 2011, just in time for the opening of the Centennial Celebration.



**Left: During the World War II years, there were far more female students than male students.
Right: Piccolo players in the Mighty Sound of the South Marching Band show their team spirit**



With only 128 pages to tell 100 years of history, we had to leave some of the fascinating and fun stuff out, and other information we had to limit to just a line or two.

One story that I would have liked to describe further was the discovery of the first Ph.D. awarded at Memphis State, in Psychology in 1969. He was Dr. John Pilley, who spent his career teaching psychology at Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C.

Just about the time I found him, he began attracting a great deal of media attention. Why? Because Doctor Pilley had managed to teach his border collie, Chaser, to recognize more than 1,000 words. It is a fascinating story but I had to reduce it to a line on our timeline.

I'll leave you with just one example of a great item I couldn't manage to wedge into the book:

In 1922, those agriculture students I mentioned decided to pull a prank on Halloween. They dismantled all the rolling stock belonging to the school: tractors, wagons and the like, and reassembled them up on the second and third floors of the administration building for students, staff and faculty to find the next morning. Not to be outdone, the following year, the agriculture students took those Holstein cows up to the upper floors and tethered them to the doors. Cows do not like being on unlevel ground. I cannot imagine how they got them in the building and up all those stairs—or how they managed, the next morning, to get them out.



Fountain Square and the University Center today

Totalitarian Temptations



Professor Andrei Znamenski, talks about his latest book, *Red Shambhala*, with Professor Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas

Dueñas-Vargas: Professor Znamenski, what is Shambhala? Is it a prophecy? Is it a geographic place for Buddhism? Is it a land of plenty and spiritual enlightenment? Is it a violent and aggressive creed? Would you please tell us what is the Shambhala of your book?

Znamenski: To make a long story short, Shambhala was a Buddhist prophecy that had emerged in the Early Middle Ages. When Muslims had advanced into Afghanistan and Northern India, they dislodged the Buddhists from these areas, and they had to find a safe haven somewhere. So they came up with a spiritual resistance prophecy that there was a land, a utopian land, a kind of a Buddhist paradise, where the members of this faith would be free to live and worship not been harassed by the “barbarians” whom the Buddhist called “Mlecca people” or, in other words, the people of Mecca. The legend claimed that somewhere in the North there was a

mysterious country, a land of plenty where people lived 900 years, where they were rich and had houses where roofs were clad in gold, and where nobody suffered, and of course, where the Buddhist religion existed in its pure form and so forth.

Dueñas-Vargas: But Shambhala involves, as well, a concept of holy war. Is that true?

Znamenski: By the way, in original Buddhism there was no concept of Paradise. This concept emerged as a result of encounters with the Muslim world. The prophecy also claimed that when the true faith (read Buddhism) would be in danger, the king of Shambhala named Rudra Chakrin would come with a huge army and crash the enemies of the faith. So, it is a concept of a holy war, pure and simple. Many people are not aware that such a concept existed in Tibetan Buddhism. The Shambhala prophecy lingered on, and

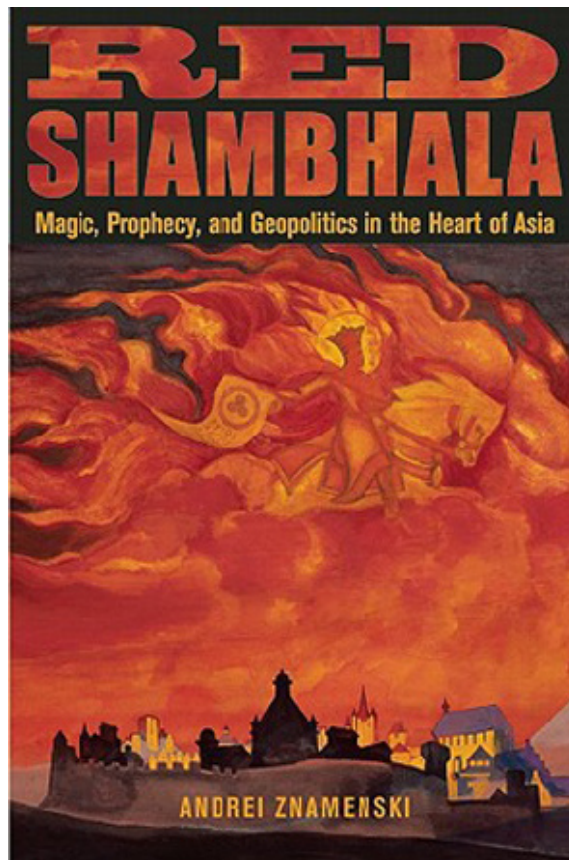
in modern time was sometimes engaged, when the Mongol-Tibetan world felt threatened by outsiders. At the same time, Shambhala was also understood as an internal war against one's own inner demons. It was an aspiration for a spiritual perfection. In the course of time, the former, the holy war part, gradually disappeared and the latter one became more relevant. A nice example for some other religions to follow. Don't you agree?

Dueñas-Vargas: Yes, in this case, Tibetan Buddhism might have served as a role model for other world religions. Yet, your book deals more with the former, the holy war segment of the prophecy. Correct?

Znamenski: Yes, the time I am writing about, the 1920s and the 1930s, was the period of troubles and dramatic changes for the Tibetan-Mongol world. The Manchu Empire in China collapsed in 1911, followed by the fall of the Russian Empire in 1917. The entire political landscape of Eurasia became filled with ethnic, religious, and class conflicts. That was when Shambhala and various sister prophecies resurfaced in Inner Asia as apocalyptic legends that helped local populations to deal with reality.

Dueñas-Vargas: In your book you mention how Shambhala and other related Asian prophecies were also used by outsiders, especially by the Bolsheviks in Red Russia. Tell us more about it.

Znamenski: It's an excellent question. See, originally Bolsheviks, when they came to power in 1917, firmly expected that Communism would win first in the most advanced Western countries, where organized socialist movement had a long history. But, unfortunately for them, Western workers didn't respond to the Bolshevik gospel of world-wide Communist revolution. The only success they had was among Asian people, where the Bolsheviks were able to plague themselves into local national liberation movements. That was how they became interested in latching on Mongol-Tibetan prophecies and linking them to Communism. The Communist International, an organization created in 1919 to promote the world-wide revolution, established a Mongol-Tibetan Section to draw the local nomads, peasants and junior



lama monks to Communism. For example, in Mongolia, Bolshevik fellow-travellers explained to the populace that Communism was actually a fulfillment of legendary Shambhala.

Dueñas-Vargas: Yes, as well-explained in the book, they were extremely ambitious!

Znamenski: Yes, quite ambitious. You have to understand that at that time early Bolsheviks lived by a revolutionary romanticism. They expected the coming of the world-wide revolutionary fire would cleanse the whole world from oppression. Non-Western colonial nationalities were viewed as allies in this fight against imperialist West. At one point, Leon Trotsky, one of the chief leaders of the Russian revolution, even suggested that the Bolsheviks send a cavalry division to India, straight across

Inner Asia, and liberate entire Asia. In my book I describe another curious episode when Red Russia sent an expedition that was disguised as a group of Buddhist pilgrims and that tried to sway the 13th Dalai Lama to the Bolshevik side.

Dueñas-Vargas: Well, in your book you profile a group of very strange characters that include not only people on the Left but also on the Right side. Can you elaborate?

Znamenski: Absolutely. My book actually represents a series of biographical essays that are linked together because all my characters were somehow connected with each other. Let's start with the Bolsheviks and their fellow travellers. The first one is Alexander Barchenko, an occult writer from St. Petersburg, and his Bolshevik secret police patron Gleb Bokii, the master of codes who was actually one of the spearheads of the Communist Revolution 1917. At some point, Bokii decided to use Tibetan Buddhism and its spiritual techniques to change the minds of the people, or in other words to help engineer the new communist human being.

Dueñas-Vargas: To engineer?

Znamenski: Yes, he and some other Bolshevik intellectuals were upset that the revolution did not change the human nature, and they were playing with an idea of transformation of the human beings in order to make them better. One of

the chapters of the book carries a peculiar title: “The Engineer of the Human Soul.” In fact, in the 1920s, unlike later times, there were lots of social experiments in Red Russia, crazy experiments. It was like the United States in 1960s. There were communes, different types of Left groups, avant-garde artists and poets, anarchists.

Dueñas-Vargas: I didn’t bring yet a question about Bokii’s attempt to use the Buddhist tantra and naturism.

Znamenski: Well, we are not going now there because, it’s something that readers might learn from the book on their own.

Dueñas-Vargas: Another two major characters are a Russian American painter Nicholas Roerich and his wife Helena. They were also interested in Shambhala. They wanted to go to Tibet and retrieve Tibetan wisdom. Was their goal purely spiritual?

Znamenski: Not really. This ambitious couple nourished a megalomaniac idea to build in the heart of Asia a Tibetan Buddhist utopia (they called it the Sacred Union of the East) that would throw light to the rest of the humankind. At one point, in 1926, they tried to flirt with Communism because Helena and Nicholas Roerich believed that since the Shambhala legend said salvation would come from the North, they wanted to use Red Russia in their grand scheme. In fact, Roerich went to Tibet, posing as reincarnated Dalai Lama and pretended to dislodge the existing 13th Dalai Lama. Red Russia refused to wholeheartedly support such a reckless project and the couple became frustrated with the Bolsheviks.

Dueñas-Vargas: They were living their own fantasy, weren’t they?

Znamenski: Yes, pretty much. It was a geopolitical fantasy that, by the way, perfectly fit the context of the time, which historian Eric Hobsbawm called the age of extremes. When they parted with the Bolsheviks, the Roeriches began courting American sponsors. Among them we find a rich currency speculator Louis Horch and future FDR’s vice- president Henry Wallace, who in fact later sponsored the Roerich’s second expedition to Asia.

Dueñas-Vargas: This is unbelievable. Now, let’s turn to another peculiar character, the “Bloody Baron,” a right-wing opponent of the Bolsheviks.

Znamenski: Roman von Ungern Sternberg, a Baltic German baron, a descendant of Teutonic knights.

Dueñas-Vargas: Yes, he was a very ruthless character.

Znamenski: Pretty much an evil character, and in fact one of the predecessors of the Nazis. This baron who acquired such notoriety in Inner Asia in 1920-1921 belonged to the elite of Old Russia. After the 1917 revolution, he became obsessed with a grand project of restoring monarchies from China and Russia to Germany and Austro-Hungary. Eventually he escaped from the Bolsheviks because they had a popular support and he didn’t and, while escaping southward, hijacked Mongolia. He milked for a while national sentiments of Mongols and helped them to liberate their country from the Chinese.

And that is why he lost that country. The Mongols, who at first glorified him and declared him a reincarnation of Mahakala, a god-protector of Tibetan Buddhism, suddenly realized that the baron simply had his own agenda that was utterly strange to them. For example, trapped in the world of his European xenophobia, Ungern was talking to them about the so-called Jewish conspiracy, which sounded quite bizarre to the nomads who asked themselves a question, “What’s going on?”

Dueñas-Vargas: He was out of place.

Znamenski: Exactly.

Dueñas-Vargas: Your primary sources are impressive. How and where did you find these documents?

Znamenski: I became interested in the topic about seven years ago, and then began reading relevant literature and simultaneously gathering primary sources in archives of Moscow, New York, and St. Petersburg, but actual writing took me two years, from 2008 to 2009. Quest Books, my publisher, gave me an advanced contact in 2008 and specified that the book should have no more than 80,000 words, which is about 300 pages; an editor explained to me that anything that goes beyond that will simply scare people away. This helped to discipline my mind.

Dueñas-Vargas: Thank you for sharing with us the information about your most recent book, and good luck with future projects.

Znamenski: Thank you too. I wanted to add that the book is available on amazon.com, where I also created my author’s page - a nice amazon feature that allows authors to profile their books like, for example, posting video clips that sample book chapters.

A Maoist Utopia in the Land of Descartes

By Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas



Demonstrators in Paris, May 1968

On September 9, 2011, Professor Richard Wolin, distinguished professor of history at the CUNY Graduate Center, inaugurated the 2011-2012 Marcus W. Orr Center for the Humanities series “Civility/Incivility & Civic Discourse.” His lecture, based on his latest book, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, The Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*, focused on the influence of Mao’s Cultural Revolution on French intellectuals in the aftermath of May 1968, when strikes by students and workers, led to a massive movement of ten million French men and women and the virtual shutdown of the central government.

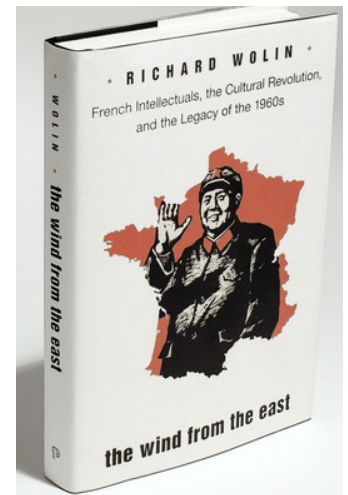
1968 sparked a wave of revolutions led by students elsewhere: Tlatelolco in Mexico City, New York, Chicago, Berlin, Warsaw, and Prague. The common denominator of these uprisings was the disenchantment with the unfulfilled promises of Western modernity. What made May of 1968 in France different was the alliance between workers and students, the enlisting of la crème of the French intellectuality in social issues, and the transformation of the revolt into a “cultural revolution” characterized by a new approach to ponder politics, one that discouraged the assault to political power, and instead, pursued a revolution in the fields of sexuality, family life, everyday life, and the representation of marginal groups—women, immigrants, gays and unemployed.

Wolin described how Maoism captured the imaginations of France’s leading cultural figures. Disillusioned by Soviet communism, alienated from the political apathy of the Fifth Republic, and radicalized by the Vietnam War, intellectuals such as Michel Foucault, Jean Paul Sartre, Julia Kristeva, Phillippe Sollers and Jean-Luc Godard were seized with a fascination for Mao Zedong, and “China became the embodiment of a radiant utopian future.” Mao’s new model of revolution, which enhanced the central role of peasantry, seemed more fruitful than the Soviet orthodoxy to fight colonialism in the Third World. Those who were looking for a different political model for the Third World, including French renowned thinkers, embraced the new road to socialism. Allure to Mao increased when he enacted the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Nonetheless, the revolts of May of 1968, a movement from below, didn’t convoke the French intelligentsia. In the aftermath of the rebellion,

when they left the Ecole Normale Supérieure—the French scenario for high thinking—to support immigrants, unemployed, prisoners and gays they gained instant recognition. When young Maoists became victims of repression by the Pompidou government, intellectuals such as Sartre took over the Maoist newspaper, *La Cause du Peuple*, and affiliated with Maoist journals, participated in demonstrations, and wrote on behalf of anti-authoritarian causes. Foucault committed himself to political activism with the Maoist Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons. May 1968 proved to be fruitful for Foucault, his conception on micro powers, his rejections of foundational concepts for the social sciences, such as “class struggle” or bourgeois ideas on freedom and civil liberties, his studies on the role of the institutions of incarceration, and his ideas about discipline and punishment, were shaped during these years.

For the group of intellectuals that embraced the cause of French students and workers was a reality check. Their commitment with Maoism had little to do with a real understanding of Chinese politics. Facing the vibrant spirit of freedom demanded by the young people after

May 1968, they no longer were able to merge Mao’s ideas and practices, which they hardly knew anyway, with the new modes of social struggle from below that the French revolutionaries offered. As Wolin says, “They began to understand politics in an entirely new light.” The infatuation with Maoism, paradoxically served as a vehicle for an emancipatory transformation of French society. Students, workers, and high intellectuals applied their “cultural revolution” to question old dogmas and official politics, transforming the politics of everyday life. The Cultural Revolution addressed existential concerns relating to sexuality, family, and intimacy. It also questioned authority, and defended the rights of women, gays, immigrants and the unemployed. The May 1968 slogan “Forbidden to Forbid” looks like the antithesis of Mao’s authoritarian agenda.



Paris, May 1968

Minor in Religious Studies

By Robert Yelle

The Minor in Religious Studies was launched officially in Fall 2010 with the offering of RLGN 1100: Introduction to Religion (co-taught by Drs. Kent Schull and Robert Yelle). The second core class, RLGN 3100: Perspectives on Religion, was offered by Dr. Yelle in Spring 2011. RLGN 1100 is being offered this fall by Dr. Znamenski, and we plan to offer a section of RLGN 3100 in Spring 2012. All of the core classes are currently being taught by faculty in the Department of History.

Student demand for these classes has been high. All have been full, including the auditorium section of RLGN 1100 offered in Fall 2010, which enrolled 61 students. Given that RLGN 1100 has now been approved for General Education credit, we anticipate increased student demand, and would like to offer one or more sections in the spring. We are currently looking for adjunct instructors for that purpose. If you are aware of any suitable candidates, we would greatly appreciate it if you would let us know and/or ask them to



Dr. Robert Yelle
Advisor, Religious Studies

contact Dr. Yelle directly at ryelle@memphis.edu.

The minor has a webpage: <http://www.memphis.edu/rlgn/>. This is the first place to go for information, including requirements for completing the minor. You may also contact Dr. Yelle with any specific questions.

We have, so far, just a handful of declared minors, although as time develops and students fulfill more of the requirements for the minor, we expect that this number will grow. We would appreciate your assistance in advertising the existence of the minor so that those students who might be interested will become aware of this opportunity and can begin planning for it early in their college careers. Please recommend that your students visit <http://www.memphis.edu/rlgn/> to learn about the minor. Interdisciplinary Studies also hosted a table at the Discover Your Major Day, to provide information there on the Minor in Religious Studies and other interdisciplinary programs.

Please take a moment also to look at the list of approved electives for the minor. Special topics courses may be granted credit towards the minor on a case-by-case basis. If there are additional courses that are offered regularly that you believe should be listed as approved electives, please contact us. Please also contact us if you think that any courses should be removed from the list because there are no plans to offer them again in the future.

The ability of the minor to grow and develop requires a substantial commitment of time on the part of interested faculty. We are grateful to all of the departments and faculty that offer the elective classes without which the minor could not exist. We hope that, as the minor develops, it will successfully match faculty interest with student demand; and that it may become possible to think about offering additional sections or courses, consistent with the constraints on departmental resources.

Apart from the curriculum, there are a few areas where new initiatives have been under way. On April 21, 2011, we sponsored our first event, a talk by the Tibetan Buddhist scholar Tulku Orgyen P'huntsok, on the topic of "Buddhism in the Modern World." Invitations were extended to the broader Memphis community, and about 70 people attended. We plan to bring in another outside speaker in Spring 2012.

There are also plans underway to organize a Religious Studies Reading Group. This will be co-organized by Dr. Yelle and Dr. Seth Abrutyn, assistant professor in the Department of Sociology. The purpose will be to gather to discuss both faculty works in progress and important current scholarship on religion. Students will also be invited to attend. Please feel free to contact Dr. Yelle (ryelle@memphis.edu) for further information or to indicate your interest in participating.



Welcome to our New Instructors

Professors Courtney L. Luckhardt, Colin B. Chapell, and Andrew M. Daily, have joined the Department of History to help meet the increasing demands of our Online Program and satellite-campus instruction. They are a great addition to the department and we wish them success and enjoyment.



Dr. Courtney L. Luckhardt

Dr. Luckhardt is a recent graduate of the University of Notre Dame, receiving her Ph.D. in Medieval Studies there, specializing in early medieval history. She is excited to be a part of the innovative online history program here at UM, and she will be teaching courses primarily in medieval history and late antiquity, circa 200-1500 AD. Next semester, she plans to teach a course entitled “Medieval Travel,” which dovetails nicely with her research interests.

Her research focuses on travel and communication in Western Europe before the year 1000, particularly religious travel by saints, holy men, and pilgrims. Her work adds to our understanding of the transformation of the Roman world, as her primary sources, hagiography, when combined with

an understanding of landscape and material culture, show the connectivity of the post-Roman world, as well as the diversity and variety of monastic life and religious travel.

So far, both the university and the city of Memphis have been treating her well, although having grown up in the San Francisco Bay Area, moving here has been a big transition. She is enjoying living in Midtown, though, and the food in this town is amazing! She loves to cook as well, so the farmer’s market downtown has become a favorite spot of hers.

Colin Chapell grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, where he learned to love Cardinals baseball. In high school, he had some wonderful teachers that really sparked his interest in history. When he went to college, Dr. Chapell attended Covenant College on Lookout Mountain, Georgia. It was there that he met his wonderful wife, Heather. Colin and Heather got married the summer before their senior year of college, and since that time they have moved 11 times!

One of their early moves was across the Atlantic Ocean. In England, Dr. Chapell wrote his M.Phil. dissertation at the University of Cambridge; along with a



Dr Colin B. Chapell

degree, it was there that Dr. Chapell really developed a love for travel, and he would love to work on a project that would bring him back to Cambridge someday.

After the year in England, the Chapells returned to the United States to the University of Alabama for his Ph.D. His dissertation explored how church officials in the Deep South used Protestant theology to argue for new constructions of gender. He examined the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the Methodist Episcopal Church, South (MECS), and the emerging Holiness movement, and argued that these groups had specific theological emphases that changed how church leaders conceived of manhood, womanhood, and family life.

The Chapells, as well as their dogs Cooper and Kalen, are excited to be part of the Department of History here at The University of Memphis, and they are looking forward to getting involved in the community here.



Dr. Andrew M. Daily

Dr. Daily's interest in history emerged from childhood attentiveness to historical events, so much so that his parents thought he would be a teacher when he was 5. Growing up in the Reagan years, buffeted by the torsions from the end of the Cold War, reinforced his interests. One of his earliest memories was, with the rest of his elementary school class,

watching Reagan and Gorbachev and their wives drive up San Francisco's California Street on their way to a strategic arms summit. He knew then that something important was happening and wanted to know what and why. Other events – the Challenger, Tiananmen Square, the end of the Cold War, the end of apartheid – he only experienced second-hand, but all fired his interest in the unfolding of historical events.

While he was initially interested in American history, particularly American radical history, he studied European history and philosophy at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. An interest in the irrational tradition in European thought led him to study Surrealism, which in turn led him to the French Caribbean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Beginning with a passion for the Martiniquan poet, politician and critic Aimé Césaire, he expanded his purview to trace the impact that Caribbean intellectuals have had on France, particularly in the realm of ideas. For a year at UCLA and then at Rutgers University, he examined how this view from the Caribbean reworked concepts of nation, race, belonging and citizenship. His dissertation, completed this past spring under the supervision of Prof. Bonnie Smith, explored the genealogy of French Caribbean thinking and its impact on both 20th-century French and global thought.

He is currently working on two articles related to the dissertation. One looks at how Antillean students in the 1950s used the rhetoric of decolonization and citizenship to make claims for belonging in France; the second explores a 1972 meeting between African-American scholars and activists and Martiniquan intellectuals and explores their conversations about race, culture and black power. He is also working on revising his dissertation for publication, which is tentatively titled "Toward the Antillean Revolution."

At Rutgers University and at Cooper Union, he has offered courses on European history, Global and World history, Caribbean history and African history. This year at The University of Memphis, he is teaching both online and in the classroom, teaching History of the Caribbean, Modern European Intellectual and Cultural History, the World since 1945, World Civilization II, and From Colonialism to Globalism.

When he is not teaching, reading or writing, you can find him riding his bicycle, listening to music, or trying to become a better cook.