Global China Forum

China in 2012: Great Challenges and Few Options
Yawei Liu, The Carter Center's China Program
On January 16, Dr. Yawei Liu, the Director of The Carter Center's China Program, gave a lecture discussing the challenges China would be facing in 2012. He pointed out that China needs very many things in 2012 and beyond in order not to fall off a cliff or confront a popular rebellion. While the world may not come to an end in 2012, China has to weather both domestic and international challenges to be a true and meaningful great power.

The Evolutionary Psychology of Chinese Religion
Kelly James Clark, Calvin College
On March 8, Professor Kelly Clark of Calvin College gave a presentation in our Center. Professor Clark pointed out that though it is widely claimed that the Chinese are not religious, recent work in the cognitive and evolutionary psychology of religion, however, suggests that religious beliefs are natural, normal, and nearly universal. These insights force a reconsideration of ancient Chinese texts in which he finds that the Chinese are, from Kongzi to Zhuangzi, deeply religious.

New Visiting Scholar
HUANG Rui is Associate Professor in School of Management at Minzu University of China. He earned his Ph.D. in Management from Renmin University of China, Beijing, China in July 2007. Over the past years, he has concentrated on the study of Human Resources and Family Business. Currently, he is interested in the study of entrepreneurship, human resource management, and social capital. In recent years, he has been responsible for or taken part in five projects in human resource management and social capital.

Congratulations!
Aining Hu, a Ph.D. student in sociology at Purdue University, successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation on May 31, 2012, entitled "Folk Religion in Chinese Villages." He will start a position in the Department of Sociology, Fudan University, Shanghai. Congratulations, Dr. Hu!

Bringing Chinese Religion to the World

In order to bring Chinese religion to world academia, in 2012 I have traveled far to give lectures and presentations. In February, I visited Rome and discussed Chinese religion with scholars at the Roma Tre University and at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. To my delight, walking carefully on the icy streets in snowy Rome, I found seven magnificent basilicas within half a day. All of them had masterful paintings and sculptures and were well-heated, with an apparent open-door policy for worshippers, pilgrims, and other visitors. It appears to me that the Church is alive.

Padua in northern Italy is a lovely city full of rock-paved streets, serene alleys, magnificent basilicas, and public squares. Galileo Galilei was once on the faculty of the University of Padova, which was founded in 1222. The Galileo spirit seemed to be present at the international conference, "From Religious Diversity to Religious Pluralism: What is at Stake?" which was held in a classic archive hall of the university. My presentation, "Oligopoly Is Not Pluralism," engaged discussions with the students on religion, ethnicity, identity, gender, polygamy, democracy, and international politics in the United Arab Emirates in February, I was amazed to see the many tangible accomplishments within the 40 years since its independence: the world's tallest and most luxurious buildings, creative architectural styles, huge shopping malls, etc. It was kind of surreal for me to give lectures and visit classes at the American University of Sharjah and also at Zayed University in Dubai. My hosts selected the topic, "The Rise of a Christian China? Religious Revival in China and Its Implications." Had I not delivered this lecture, I wouldn't have believed that such a topic would be interesting to people in the UAE. I found that almost all of the professors were trained in the West. Also, almost all the female students were wearing black hijabs, and some were completely veiled showing only their eyes. However, the female students walking in the hallways of the modern building commonly held an iPhone or a Blackberry in one hand and a MacBook on the other arm. In classrooms, I engaged discussions with the students on religion, ethnicity, identity, gender, polygamy, democracy, and international politics.

Inside the Issue

CSSP Research Workshop 2012..........................3
The 9th Summer Institute................................4
Thoughts of Visiting Scholars..............................6
Global China Forum........................................8
New Visiting Scholars........................................8

Volume 5 Number 1, June 2012
I feel strange about what I saw and experienced. Israel, Israel, a place where people wrestle with God? The holy land is full of tensions and puzzles. However, since the visit, I have been struggling to sort out my thoughts and feelings about what I saw and experienced. Israel, Israel.

In Taiwan in April, I gave a series of three lectures at the National Chengchi University explaining my theorizing about Chinese religion and society. I lectured on "Confucianism, Christianity, and Civil Religion in China" at the National Taiwan University, presented findings of the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey at Tunghai University in Taichung, and discussed "The Changing Church-State Relations and Christian Development in Mainland China" at the China Evangelical Seminary. My hosts took me not only to some small yet famed restaurants for delicious food but also to many Christian churches and folk-religion temples in Taipei, Taizhong, and Tainan. In addition, I conducted two interviews with some Christian leaders who have played significant roles in Taiwan's democratization.

In Israel in May, I gave a lecture at Bar-Ilan University on the topic of my new book, “Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule” and made a presentation on Chinese Folk Religion at the 11th Annual Conference on Asian Studies at Tel Aviv University. My hosts then took me to see the Jordan River, the Golan Heights, the Sea of Galilee, the Dead Sea, and of course, Jerusalem. It is not a surprise to find that this small but holy land is full of tensions and puzzles. However, since the visit, I have been struggling to sort out my thoughts and feelings about what I saw and experienced. Israel, Israel, a place where people wrestle with God?

In June, my February travels completed with a trip to Princeton University, where I gave a lecture entitled, “Religion in China Today: Mapping Folk Religion.”

It is sad that nowadays wherever there is an ocean shore, you will find Chinese there. This is true, and I also find that many of them have become Christians. I interviewed a key leader of Chinese churches in Venice and attended a three-hour Sunday service at the Chinese church in Padova. I observed an outdoor baptism ceremony at the Dubai Chinese church, which was celebrating its 10th year anniversary. There are also Chinese Christian groups in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, I also had many conversations with a young Chinese man who was attending a Jewish Yeshiva and was well on his way to converting to Judaism!

The life of auditing classes took me through seasons from fall to spring, from empty corn fields to colorful fall foliage flying in the wind, from snow to tender shoots breaking out from the ground, until the trees gained another ring around their trunks. In addition to what I've learned in classes, what I have gained in my sphere of knowledge also includes the discussions of scholarly papers with professors and students of CRCS, scholarly lectures that I gave and attended, and theological lectures given by Dr. Leonard Siddhartha.

In the following months, I worked through the classrooms of the sociology of religion, literature, and philosophy to learn from these fields of specialization and to experience American teaching style, discussion, and the English language in various accents. The life of attending classes took me through seasons from fall to spring, from empty corn fields to colorful fall foliage flying in the wind, from snow to tender shoots breaking out from the ground, until the trees gained another ring around their trunks. In addition to what I've learned in classes, what I have gained in my sphere of knowledge also includes the discussions of scholarly papers with professors and students of CRCS, scholarly lectures that I gave and attended, and theological lectures given by Dr. Leonard Siddhartha.

As visiting scholars, our job is to learn and to visit. We have visited the University of Chicago, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Notre Dame, Valparaiso University, and many others. We are deeply impressed by these universities. After we came back from our visits to the East and West coasts of the United States, we will be coming close to the end of our visiting period in the States.

It is said that after the initial taste of novelty, one enters a difficult period of adaptation. My roommate, Professor CHEN Shenghui, and I must be the exception to this common experience. Up to this point, we have no clue what a difficult period would have been like. For this smooth transition, we are truly grateful for those who offered us warm help. We are thankful for the care of Professor Fenggang Yang and his wife Juan He, and for Dr. Lily Szeto, who is so capable and warm hearted. We are especially touched by the loving faith of Professor and Mrs. Thomas and Emily Berrett, who furnished our apartment and continue to care for us. During this past year, not only did they give us new furniture, they also constantly brought us newspapers and presents for various holidays. Often times, when we opened the door, we would find their presents waiting for us on the doorstep. They cared about our learning, and helped us in every way they could.

Years from now, I don't know if I will have another chance to come back to this peaceful land among the cornfields. However, I know I will often return here in the depth of my memory, savoring the hospitality I've received.
A Dream of Childhood Found in the U.S.: Notes on a Visit to the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University

CHEN Shengbai
Center of Religion and Culture, Lanzhou University

A time flies by; it’s been nine and a half months since I arrived at Purdue in July of 2011. I have entered the stage of counting down toward the return home to China. In addition to the natural thoughts of home, there’s also the lingering affection toward the time I spent at Purdue, which makes me increasingly cherish the short period of time I have left till I leave for my country. At the time of Lily’s phone call, I was not ready to sum up my life as a visiting scholar here at Purdue. My life and feelings in 800 words? Research and studies, experiences, and gratitude fill my mind.

For nearly eight years, I have devoted my research mainly to the study of Christianity in Southern Gansu, the region in the northwestern part of China where the Han and Tibetan ethnic groups intermingle. The reason for me to go abroad is that I sensed that as I switch my research to religious studies, I need to further equip myself with specialized knowledge and research experience. I came here because of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society, Professor Fenggang Yang’s outstanding academic achievements, and his generosity. After I arrived at Purdue, I participated in the Workshop on Chinese Spirituality and Society, sat in classes, and attended scholarly seminars, meetings, lectures, writing workshops, and organization of materials for various subjects. Through this series of scholarly training and participation, I gained a general understanding of the sociology of religion as a specialized research subject and its scientific methodology, which will gradually infuse into my own research.

Reading about the United States only provides me with partial truths. Before I came to Purdue, American friends had told me, “the real United States is in the Midwest.” Therefore, I chose to come to Purdue University, located on a “big farm,” without hesitation. Here, the nature, society, and individuals make me feel peaceful, free, and warm. People and things here are just like the nature and religion of this place; they form an integrated whole, almost entirely natural, warm and harmonious, bestowing comfort and ease upon those who live in it. Compared to China at present, this experience is practically luxurious.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to write these words. This will be a warm memory filled with love. Thanks to Professor and Mrs. Fenggang Yang, Dr. Lily Sheto, Dr. Alice Wang, and the outstanding young scholars Anning Hu, Jun Lü, and Miao Li of CRCS for all the help and instruction they offered in studies and in life. What I have harvested here is more than learning, but also charitable friendship. Special thanks are due to Professor and Mrs. Thomas and Emily Berndt of the College of Health and Human Sciences. Their generosity and warmth provided me with irreplaceable help and facility for my life in the U.S. and my understanding of American society.

One idea flashes across my mind: isn’t this the dream of my childhood? Then upon this topic emerged.

Translated by Alice Wang
The 9th Summer Institute for the Scientific Study of Religion

The 9th Summer Institute for the Scientific Study of Religion will be held July 4-10, 2012 at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. This year’s Summer Institute is part of the Chinese Spirituality and Society Program, and the focus is on developing the pedagogy of the sociology of religion in the Chinese context. The participants are selected faculty members at Chinese universities that have been teaching sociology of religion courses at either the undergraduate or graduate level. The keynote lecturers of this year include Shuming Bao, Huong-Kuang Chao, Fan Lizhu, George Hong, Li Xiangping, Duan Lin, David Palmer, Wei Dedong, Fenggang Yang, and Fu-Tchang Ying.

Shuming Bao earned his Ph. D. in applied economics from Clemson University in 1996. He was a research scientist at MathSoft from 1996-97, and is currently a senior research coordinator for China initiatives at the Center on Religion and Chinese Society (CRCS) at Purdue University. His current research focuses on the church-state relations in China, the history of Protestant Christianity in China and Hong Kong, and contemporary Chinese Protestantism. He teaches courses on Christianity in Twentieth Century China, Christianity in Hong Kong, Protestantism in Reform China, and Religious Policy and Practices in China Today.

Huong-Kuang Chao is Associate Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of Religious Studies of Graduate Institute of Education at Tunghai University. His research focuses on social change and individual religious and religious organization change in Chinese Society. He teaches courses such as Seminar on Religion in Social Contexts, Seminar on Religion and Life Education, and Seminar on Religion and Culture. All these courses include some field work.

Fan Lizhu is Professor of Sociology at East China Normal University in Shanghai. Some major research projects he has directed in recent years include Religious Culture and Social Order, Chinese Folk Religion Study, and Empirical Study of Spirituality in the Greater Delta Area of the Yangtze River. The courses he has been teaching include Sociology of Religion, Religion and Culture, Contemporary Chinese Religion, and Spirituality in China.

Duan Lin is Professor of Sociology and Associate Dean of the School of Social Sciences at National Taiwan University. He is also the President of the Taiwan Association of Religious Studies and Council Member of the Center for Social Theories at Peking University. His research focuses on Sociological Theory, Sociology of Religion, Sociology of Law, and Confucianism Ethics Studies. The courses he teaches include: Classical Reading in Sociology of Religion, Religion and Ethics, Religion and Law, Religion and Economics, Religion and Globalization, Religion and Society in Mainland China, Literature, Religion and Capitalism Studies.

Wei Dedong is Associate Professor in the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China and Director of the Panel Study Workshop on Chinese Religion. He is now directing the research project, “Theoretical and Empirical Study on Individual Selection of Faith in Rural China: A Public Good Provision Perspective,” which is supported by the National Science Foundation of China. He teaches courses on Sociology of Religion and Religion and Modern Society.

Fenggang Yang is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society (CRCS) at Purdue University. His current research focuses on the political economy of religion in China, Christian ethics and market transition in China, faith and trust among business people in China, and Chinese Christian churches in the United States. He teaches courses on Religion in America, Religion and Society in China, Seminar on the Sociology of Religion, and Seminar on Contemporary China.
Rhyu H. Williams is Professor and Chair of Sociology at Loyola University Chicago, where he is also Director of the McNamara Center for the Social Study of Religion. His publications include Cultural Wars in American Politics (1997), A Bridging of Faiths (with Jay Demerath; 1992), Promise Keepers and the New Masculinity (2001), the forthcoming Navigating to Faith (with R. Stephen Warner), and articles in journals such as the American Sociological Review, Sociological Theory, and Social Problems. From 2003-08, Williams edited the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, from 1996-99 he co-edited Social Problems (with Joel Best).

Yuling Wang is Assistant Professor in the Department of International Studies at the American University in Shanghai, the United Arab Emirates. She is interested in sociology of religion, immigration, and race/ethnicity. She has published journal articles and book chapters on Chinese conversion to Christianity in the United States, Muslims in the United States, and Muslims in urban China.

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Huiming Bao is an applied economist at Purdue UniversityIndianapolis. From 2002-2008, she served as editor of the Review of Religious Research. She is also the author of two books and numerous articles on Catholicism. She has also worked with the Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate at Georgetown University (CARA) compiling two editions of their directory of Emerging Religious Communities in the United States. Her book manuscripts, Ti Build a Young Church for Tomorrow: Discovering and Improving the Spiritual Health of Church Communities is forthcoming from Paulist Press. Currently, she is working with CARA on a study of young women entering Catholic religious congregations today.

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David A. Palmer is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong, where he teaches courses on anthropology, religion, and traditional Chinese society. His recent books include the award-winning The Religious Question in Modern China: Chinese Religious Life; and Daosim in the 20th Century: Between Eternity and Modernity.
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Translated by Alice Wang
A Year at Purdue

WANG Ding'an

Zhejiang University of Technology

Thanks to Professor Fenggang Yang's invitation, I came to the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University as a visiting scholar from August 2011 to July 2012.

When I first came, West Lafayette welcomed me with the hottest summer in a century. Every warmer were the welcoming banquet and the research workshop, which lasted for a month. At that time, Professor Yang arranged for the workshop participants to visit the greater Lafayette area, a variety of Christian churches of different denominations, and a Muslim mosque on the campus of Purdue University, as well as to go canoeing and to witness a baptism in a river at Turkey Run State Park. I had a fruitful first month by enjoying a feast of the scholarship of the sociology of religion and I had a taste of the Midwest, which is most representative of American culture.

In the following months, I walked into the classrooms of the sociology of religion, literature, and philosophy to learn from these fields of specialization and to experience American teaching styles, discussion, and the English language in various accents. The life of auditing classes took me through seasons from fall to spring, from empty corn fields to colorful fall foliage flying in the wind, from snow to tender shoots breaking out from the ground, until the trees gained another ring around their trunks. In addition to what I've learned in classes, what I have gained in my sphere of knowledge also includes the discussions of scholarly papers with professors and students of CRCS, scholarly lectures that I gave and attended, and theological lectures given by Dr. Leonard Siddhartha.

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Anning Hu, a Ph.D. student in sociology at Purdue University, successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation on May 31, 2012, entitled Folk Religion in Chinese Villages. He will start a position in the Department of Sociology, Fudan University, Shanghai. Congratulations, Dr. Hu!

Bringing Chinese Religion to the World

My new frontier of adventure of bringing Chinese religion to the world is being interviewed by radio news programs. Recently, I was interviewed by Australia's ABC Radio National, “Like a Phoenix from the Ashes: Religion in China” as well as National Public Radio, “Tranquility Square, A ‘Watershed’ For Chinese Conversions to Christianity.” The major print media have continued to contact me frequently. In the first half of this year, I have been interviewed and quoted in CNN's Belief Blog: “Jeremy Lin Emerges as Emblem of Bougiezing Asian-American Christianism”; Foreign Policy: “China’s Come to Jesus’ Moments: How Beijing Got Religion”; and Christianity Today: “Discipling the Dragon: Christian Publishing Finds Success in China.”

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Inside the Issue

CSSP Research Workshop 2012......................... 3
The 9th Summer Institute................................. 4
Thoughts of Visiting Scholars.............................. 6
Global China Forum........................................ 8
New Visiting Scholars................................. 8