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A Report on McMaster's Religious Studies Department's 50th Anniversary of Graduate Studies Celebration

Crystal M. Beaudoin

McMaster University

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Crystal M. Beaudoin
MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

McMaster's Department of Religious Studies was a hub of activity on the weekend of May 13-14, 2016, as we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of our graduate program. The weekend commenced with an opening reception and barbecue on Friday evening. Saturday began with a fiftieth anniversary luncheon, during which we heard from Professor Eileen Schuller, the Dean of Social Sciences; Professor Jeremiah Hurley, Chair of Economics; and Professor Patrick Deane, President and Vice-Chancellor of McMaster University. One of our afternoon activities was a poster session, during which current graduate students presented their research to Religious Studies alumni and other guests. Several of the students who participated in the poster session represented the field of Buddhist Studies. Following the poster session, a graduate student from the field shared with me his research and reasons for pursuing Buddhist Studies at a Canadian university.

Rein Ende is a second-year Master of Arts student who is interested in the development and spread of Buddhism in Northern India. He kindly agreed to speak with me about his poster, which is titled:

“An Index Locorum for the Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya: with a Focus on the Works of Gregory Schopen.” Gregory Schopen, who completed his Master of Arts degree in the Department of Religious Studies at McMaster in 1975, is a Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures at UCLA.

When asked to describe his research question, sources, methods and preliminary conclusions, Rein stated the following:

The purpose of my project is to prepare an index, which can be used by scholars researching this *vinaya* to proceed sequentially through the text, and have listed every reference made by Gregory Schopen. I began by listing citations to the MSV [Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya] in the indexes in each of his four collections. I reviewed the citations for uniformity and accuracy, and also crosschecked through his articles for any omissions. I have also listed cross-references, something that will be of additional use for researchers. The need for such an index was indicated by Dr. Shayne Clarke, the editor of the 2014 facsimile edition of *vinaya* texts. Although I will be publishing this in hard copy, as required, the material will be readily adaptable to the online environment.

Rein’s interest in this project stemmed from his respect for Gregory Schopen:

I believe that Greg Schopen has been one of the most influential scholars of Buddhism in recent decades. He has shifted the focus of the field to a more realistic picture of Buddhist monasticism through a new look at texts that were previously relatively ignored.

For Rein, the decision to complete his Buddhist Studies training at a Canadian institution, and specifically McMaster University, was simple:

I believe that McMaster's Department of Religious Studies has a reputation for excellence and innovation, built up over the fifty years of its existence. I believe its pre-eminence reaches across at least Canada and is a contender worldwide. I feel privileged to be a part of this tradition, and to be able to work with a scholar of the rigor and expertise of Shayne Clarke, my supervisor. Dr. James Benn, our outgoing chair, has been outstanding in his leadership of the department and deserves credit for his administrative skills and inspiration as well. The camaraderie and collegiality of the other students in this department have made these last two years an enjoyable, if challenging, experience.

Rein will continue to work on his project this summer, and plans to defend his M.A. thesis in the fall of 2016. We wish him the best of luck with this interesting endeavor!

He can be contacted at `ender(at)mcmaster(dot)ca`

The fiftieth anniversary celebration continued with an academic roundtable, during which a group of scholars comprised of professors and graduate students discussed the past, present, and future of the graduate study of religion in Canada. Associate Professor [Mark Rowe](#) represented the Buddhist Studies field during this conversation, which was followed by a reception and dinner.

There are several images of the graduate poster session and other events from the fiftieth anniversary weekend posted on the Religious Studies Department's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

Thank you to all who attended the fiftieth anniversary celebration, and a special thank you to Rein Ende for sharing his research with me. The Department of Religious Studies will certainly continue to thrive with such an innovative and dedicated graduate student body.