



## York Centre for Asian Research Update

### In this 26 September 2008 issue...

#### Opportunities

- \* David Wurfel Award deadline approaching
- \* Scholarship for a year of Buddhist Studies at a Japanese University

#### Upcoming Events

- \* Zomia: Site of the Last Great Enclosure Movement of (relatively) State-less Peoples in Mountainous Southeast Asia (Oct. 9)
- \* Bangladesh at Crossroads: The Politics of Gender and Islam (Oct. 24)
- \* Building a Relationship through Culture (Oct. 26)
- \* Trichy Sankaran – Mrdangam with members of Autorickshaw and special guests (Oct. 28)

#### York News

- \* Profs receive research funding to study English language teaching in Asia
- \* York prof co-authors illustrated book about the Ismaili Muslims

#### Call for Papers

- \* Religion and Human Rights in China
  - \* Languages of Southeast Asia
- 

### Opportunity: David Wurfel Award deadline approaching

Applications are now being accepted for The David Wurfel Award. The \$1,500 award provides financial support to an undergraduate or masters degree student who intends to conduct thesis research on Filipino history, culture or society. It is open to students enrolled at York in social sciences or humanities programs (including the Faculties of law and environmental studies), who are Canadian citizens, permanent residents or protected persons.

The application deadline is **Monday, 20 October 2008**. The successful applicant will be notified within 30 days of the deadline.

For more information, visit the YCAR website ([www.yorku.ca/ycar](http://www.yorku.ca/ycar)) or email the YCAR coordinator at [ycar@yorku.ca](mailto:ycar@yorku.ca). For an application form, click [here](#).

### Opportunity: Scholarship for a year of Buddhist Studies at a Japanese University

The BDK Canada Graduate scholarship will enable advanced graduate students in Buddhist Studies who are Canadian Citizens or studying in a Canadian University to spend one year in a Japanese University, studying and/or carrying out doctoral research. The value is CAD 40,000.

The application deadline is **1 November 2008**.

The applicant must be a registered full-time graduate student in a Canadian university or a Canadian citizen studying as a full-time graduate student in a university outside of Canada. Visa students in degree

programmes in Canadian universities may apply.

Preference will be given to advanced graduate students preparing to carry out doctoral dissertation research, but others at an early stage in their study will also be considered.

Some familiarity with Japanese language is expected but fluency is not required.

The results of the award will be announced by January 15, 2009. The term of the successful candidate's stay in Japan will be one year, which may begin at any time between April 1, 2009 and March 2010.

A completed application form and three letters of reference can be sent to Dean of Graduate Studies, School of Graduate Studies, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 4K1. Transcripts from all university level courses are to be sent directly to the School of Graduate Studies, McMaster University. Three confidential letters of reference must accompany the application in separate sealed signed envelopes. One must be from the applicant's supervisor; another letter must be from a Japanese scholar based at the Japanese institution where the applicant proposes to study.

Applications may be obtained at [www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/relstud/](http://www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/relstud/).

---

### **Upcoming Event: Zomia: Site of the Last Great Enclosure Movement of (relatively) State-less Peoples in Mountainous Southeast Asia**

*Thursday, 9 October 2008 \* 2 to 4pm \* Room KP 108, Koffler Institute, University of Toronto \* 569 Spadina Avenue \* Toronto*

"Zomia" is a shorthand reference to the huge, massif of mainland Southeast Asia, running from the Central Highlands of Vietnam westward all the way to northeastern India and including the southwest Chinese provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, and western Guangxi. Zomia has, I contend, been peopled over the last 2,000 years largely by runaways from several state-making projects in the valleys, most particularly Han state-making projects. They have, in the hills, acquired, and shifted, their ethnic identities. Far from being 'remnants' left behind by civilizing societies, they are, as it were, "barbarians by choice", peoples who have deliberately put distance between themselves and lowland, state-centers. It is in this context that their forms of agriculture, their social structures, and much of their culture, including perhaps even their illiteracy, can be understood as political choices.

James Scott, Ph.D., Yale University is the Sterling Professor of Political Science and Professor of Anthropology and is Director of the Agrarian Studies Program. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has held grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Guggenheim Foundation, and has been a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Science, Science, Technology and Society Program at M.I.T., and the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. His research concerns political economy, comparative agrarian societies, theories of hegemony and resistance, peasant politics, revolution, Southeast Asia, theories of class relations and anarchism.

For more information, visit <http://webapp.mcis.utoronto.ca/EventDetails.aspx?EventId=6117>.

### **Upcoming Event: Bangladesh at Crossroads: The Politics of Gender and Islam**

*Friday, 24 October 2008 \* 4 to 6pm \* 208N North House \* Munk Centre \* University of Toronto*

The Bangladesh State's discourse on Islam and Gender have shifted over the years, both distinctively as well as in relation with each other. I will explore this trajectory and highlight two specific cases on how the Bangladesh state has viewed notions of gender and Islam. They are the (1) the Fatwa incidences and (2) the Taslima Nasrin case.

Meghna Guhathakurta ( Ph.D. University of York, UK) until recently was Professor of International Relations

at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and is currently Executive Director at Research Initiatives, Bangladesh, an organization funding research on poverty alleviation. Her area of interest is development, gender and politics in South Asia. She has published extensively on gender, development, minority rights as well as conflict and peace-building. She served as member of the Netherlands Development Research Council from 1996 to 2002, where she chaired the sub-committee on post-conflict development. She was also member of the South Asian Peoples Committee on the Rights of Minorities, a commission formed by the organization South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR).

For more information, please visit <http://webapp.mcis.utoronto.ca/EventDetails.aspx?eventid=6599>.

### **Upcoming Event: Building a Relationship through Culture**

*Sunday, 26 October 2008 \* 2pm \* OISE, Room 5-250 \* 252 Bloor St. W. at St. George Subway Station*

The Toronto Canada-China Friendship Association, a member of the Federation of Canada-China Friendship Associations, welcomes Dr Nelly Ng to speak on 'Building a Relationship through Culture'.

Dr. Nelly Ng was one of the Founding Co-Chairs of the Canadian Foundation for Chinese Heritage Preservation (CFCHP). CFCHP has cooperated with the Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage on preservation projects. In 1997, they brought Masterpieces of 20th Century Chinese Paintings to leading venues in three cities in Canada. In 2000 they brought the Jade, the Ultimate Treasure of Ancient China exhibit to museums in five provinces and seven cities across Canada. Dr. Ng has founded the new Canadian Fund for International Understanding through Culture. She is a practicing family physician who has won many awards for both her medical and cultural work.

Dr. Ng will speak about activities she previously undertook when chairing the Canadian Foundation for Chinese Heritage Preservation and about the activities of her new Foundation. For more information, contact Michael at [michael-copeland@rogers.com](mailto:michael-copeland@rogers.com).

### **Upcoming Event: Trichy Sankaran – Mrdangam with members of Autorickshaw and special guests**

*Tuesday, 28 October 2008 \* 7:30pm \* Tribute Communities Recital Hall \* Accolade East Building \* York University*

Bridging eastern and western styles, world-renowned percussion virtuosos, Trichy Sankaran, brings his rhythmic mastery to centre stage as part of York University's Faculty concert series.

Members of autorickshaw, under the direction of his daughter Suba Sankaran and special guests, will also contribute to a rich programme featuring solo, ensemble and original compositions in the South Indian musical traditions

General admission is \$15; \$5 for students and seniors. Call the box office at 416.736.5888 for tickets.

---

### **York News: Profs receive research funding to study English language teaching in Asia**

French may be the language of love but, for many, English has come to be known as the international language of business and commerce. As Asia ascends in economic power and influence, the demand there for English language teaching (ELT) escalates. Yet no systematic research has yet been undertaken by anyone to determine the extent of Canada's participation in this market and its potential future involvement – until now. Professors Eve Haque and Mihyon Jeon of the Department of Languages, Literature & Linguistics in York's Faculty of Arts have received funding from The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada to undertake such research.

Haque and Jeon's research focuses on participation of Canadians in three government-sponsored English language teaching programs, each of which recruits, trains and administers Canadian teachers of English: the Japan Exchange and Teaching program (JET), the English Program in Korea (EPIK) and Hong Kong's Native-speaking English Teachers program (NET). The researchers will survey the central participants of the industry: teachers, students, administrators and policy-makers.

Read the rest of the story at [www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=11233](http://www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=11233). This article originally appeared in the 2 October 2008 *Y-File*.

### **York News: York prof co-authors illustrated book about the Ismaili Muslims**

The social, religious, artistic and culturally rich history of the Ismailis, a major branch of Shi'a Islam, is detailed in a new book *The Ismailis: An Illustrated History*, co-authored and co-edited by York Professor Zulfikar Hirji. Told as much through images as words, it is a sweeping history of a highly diverse Shi'a Muslim community that stretches back more than 14 centuries to the formative period of Islam.

"The Ismaili Muslims are incredibly diverse and yet share so much in common," says [Hirji](#), an anthropology professor at York and social historian of Muslim societies and cultures. He is also a YCAR Faculty Associate.

Today, the Ismailis live in over 25 countries of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, North America and Australia. Hirji, a former research associate at The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London, England, and junior research fellow at Wolfson College, University of Oxford, says "the history of the Ismailis is not unlike many other Muslim communities."

"One of the reasons for the book is to illustrate that Muslims are diverse; they live in different places, speak many languages, vary in terms of their social institutions and express their faith in many different ways," says Hirji.

"The general public today increasingly hears about the Shi'a and the Sunnis as if these were monolithic entities. Muslims should not simply be defined as Sunni or Shi'a. This type of essentialism does not do justice to communities whose identities are far more complex – but in our sound-bite culture there is often little time to explain the complex social and cultural fabric and history of living communities."

To read the rest of the story, originally published in the 18 September 2008 *Y-File*, visit [www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=11120](http://www.yorku.ca/yfile/archive/index.asp?Article=11120).

---

### **Call for Papers: Religion and Human Rights in China**

The York Centre for Asian Research (YCAR) at York University, Centre for Asian-Canadian Theology and Ministry at Knox College, University of Toronto and the Hudson Taylor Centre for Chinese Ministries at Tyndale College invite scholars, religious organizations and human rights workers to share their research and experience in a one-day symposium on Religion and Human Rights in China, to take place in Toronto on Saturday, 7 February 2009.

The 2008 Olympic Games brought unprecedented international attention to China's human rights practices, as well as intensified repression against Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims and Falun Dafa practitioners. Yet the expansion of religious activity in China has created the greatest religious revival in human history, especially for Buddhism and Christianity. Observers have noted the highly diverse application of religious policies by local governments. For Protestants and Catholics, it is no longer possible to posit a simple dichotomy between officially recognized and unregistered churches, or Catholics loyal to Rome versus the official Catholic Church. Religious charities such as the Taiwan-based Tzu-Chi Buddhist Compassion and Relief Association or the Protestant Amity Foundation play an important role in Chinese society.

The organizers invite presentations examining the diversity of religious practice in China, Communist Party religious policy, and the connection between religion and dissent. Presentations examining these from the

perspective of human rights discourse, and asking what religion can contribute to human rights in China are especially welcome. Organizers will attempt to pair academic and activist presentations to achieve a dynamic exchange between different perspectives and facilitate exchange between different religions who do not usually meet.

Abstracts of approximately 250 words and a short bio should be submitted by 17 November 2008 to [ycar@yorku.ca](mailto:ycar@yorku.ca). Successful applicants will be notified by mid-December. Panel submissions are also welcome. For more information, contact organizer Michael Stainton at [michaels@yorku.ca](mailto:michaels@yorku.ca) or 416.736.2100 ext 33068.

### Call for Papers: Languages of Southeast Asia

The linguistic map of Southeast Asia is extraordinarily rich, embracing a wide range of ethnic and typological groups, including Austronesian, Hmong-Mien, Mon-Khmer, Tai-Kadai, Tibeto-Burman, and many language families of New Guinea. The shifting boundaries of Southeast Asian polities over time, historic cross-regional migration, and colonization have all added to the complexity of language genealogies in the region, making Southeast Asia a particularly fertile field not only for the study of specific language types and groups but also for the testing and development of theoretical frameworks and models of linguistic analysis. Recent outward migrations to the USA, Europe and elsewhere, and the concomitant rise in Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Tagalog and other heritage language groups, present further opportunities for the study of Southeast Asian languages.

Despite the critical place of language studies in the development of area studies, and the diverse implications and applications of linguistics for other fields, the conversation between scholars of Southeast Asian linguistics and specialists in Southeast Asian area studies is surprisingly thin. And, within the U.S., Southeast Asian language communities such as Hmong, Khmer, Vietnamese, Lao and Tagalog risk being sidelined in the emerging body of scholarship on Heritage Language learning and teaching, whose focus gravitates towards larger communities such as Spanish and Chinese speaking communities.

We invite papers on Southeast Asian languages in any area of linguistics, phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, typology, diachronic and comparative linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, discourse analysis, conversation analysis or language teaching. We particularly encourage papers that engage with other disciplines.

Submissions from early career researchers and graduate students are strongly encouraged. In addition, a special poster session for undergraduate research will be held. Limited competitive financial assistance for travel is available.

Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be sent to the UCLA Center for Southeast Asian Studies to [cseas@international.ucla.edu](mailto:cseas@international.ucla.edu) by **Monday, 3 November 2008**. Please include name and full contact information including email address and indicate whether the submission is for a talk or for the undergraduate poster session. Notification of acceptance will be sent out by 1 December 2008.

York Centre for Asian Research (YCAR) To comment or for more information, contact [ycar@yorku.ca](mailto:ycar@yorku.ca)  
Ste. 270 York Lanes, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3.