

2009 ANNUAL REPORT PREPARED FOR
THE TUNG LIN KOK YUEN CANADA
FOUNDATION

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a place of mind



The University of British Columbia is pleased to provide this annual report to Mr. Robert H.N. Ho and The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation on the progress of the initiatives directly benefiting from your support: The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation Chair and the Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program.



The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation Chair and the Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program were established at the University of British Columbia through the tremendous vision and generosity of Mr. Robert H.N. Ho and The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation.

The program, the first of its kind in North America, began in 2006 and has enabled students and faculty to explore the application of Buddhist wisdom in relation to today's pressing global concerns. Through research and teaching, it coordinates and promotes the study of Buddhism, including the engagement of Buddhist groups, individuals, and Buddhist-inspired approaches to issues of policy, society, social justice, and social work. As an academic endeavor, the program holds that well-researched and historically accurate information regarding modern and contemporary Buddhist movements is both desirable and necessary.

The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program represents a synergy between the Institute of Asian Research (IAR) and the Department of Asian Studies, combining the strengths of each in policy and cultural knowledge and their shared commitment to deeper cross-cultural understanding. The program seeks to foster understanding of modern and contemporary Buddhist forms, and how these are involved in the socio-economic and political life of Asia and in Buddhist diaspora communities abroad. This is achieved through teaching, visiting speakers, partnerships, conferences and workshops, community outreach, faculty and student research, and creating a global network.

We are pleased to announce the launch of our new program website:

www.ubcbuddhism.wordpress.com

Information, photos, and videos detailing the teaching, research, and events organized by the Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program are made available to the public in an effort to foster a broader and deeper understanding of Buddhism and its place in contemporary society.

TEACHING

The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program sponsors undergraduate and graduate teaching about Buddhism at UBC. In 2009, the Chair taught two courses:

- ASIA 250 – Introduction to Buddhism
- Institute of Asian Research (IAR) 515B – Buddhism and Contemporary Society.

ASIA 250 - INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM (UNDERGRADUATE)

Beginning with the origins of Buddhism on the Indian subcontinent (c. 6th century BCE), this course introduces basic components of the Buddhist worldview, such as karma and the three jewels —the Buddha, the Buddhist teachings (*dharma*), and the Buddhist order (*sangha*)—covering characteristic Buddhist social roles (male and female renunciates, pious laypersons, and rulers) and forms of Buddhist practice (meditation, chanting, devotion, generosity). Tracing its historical spread from the Indian subcontinent throughout Asia, the course looks at Mahāyāna and Theravāda streams and examines Buddhism in specific Asian cultures. In addition, the course looks at issues in contemporary Buddhism and its spread into Western cultures.



For many students, *Introduction to Buddhism* is their only exposure to Buddhism during their university education. The course examines the basic teachings, and development of Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Tantric traditions, and their historical spread first through

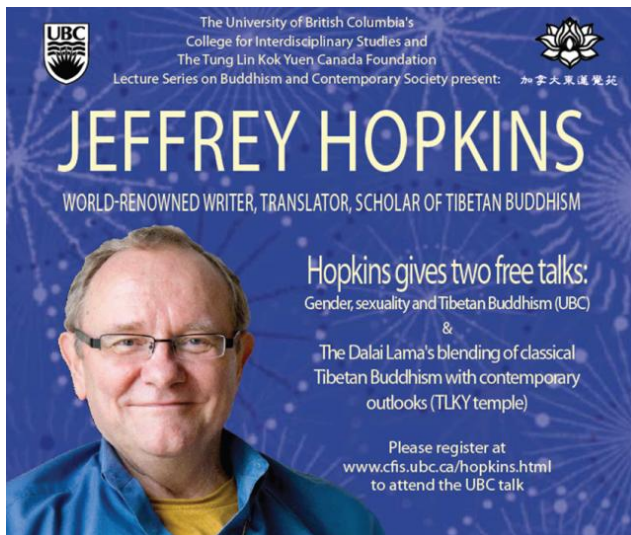
Asia and later the world. It also strongly emphasizes Buddhism in contemporary societies. The Department of Asian Studies is committed to expanding the size of this class, and adding further courses on Buddhism—including upper-level undergraduate courses on Mahāyāna and Theravāda—to UBC’s regular course calendar.

Extreme tension exists between those who hold that Buddhists should leave politics to the politicians, and those who believe Buddhists must engage the world and become involved in its power structures. In the modern history of Asia, Buddhist groups have thought carefully about the functions of modern states: military service, violence, enforcement, social service, relief, and medical care. In this course, students evaluate and critique theories that tie violence to specific forms of Buddhism-state configurations. The class also addresses Buddhism's relation to modern historical movements and ideologies such as colonialism, postcolonialism, fascism, communism, the rise of Asian nationalisms, and religious terrorism.

Buddhism and Contemporary Society finds a unique place within the Institute of Asian Research and its policy studies master's degree (Master of Arts – Asia Pacific Policy Studies Program). The IAR plans to develop a new curricular stream on the policy relevance of religion and culture, designed to build knowledge about the interrelationships between religious beliefs and behavior, and the goals, processes and outcomes of the policy process. Whether looking at Islam in Indonesia, Hinduism in India, or the range of religious activity in China that includes Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, religious beliefs and activities are increasingly intertwined with policy issues. Policy goals related to socio-economic wellbeing, environmental stewardship, education and health protection, and other issues can be seen to bear the impact of religion, either as direct expressions of religious beliefs or as an element of cultural values. Development and expansion of both undergraduate and graduate teaching opportunities continue to be an important focus.

VISITING SPEAKERS

In collaboration with the Institute of Asian Research and the Department of Asian Studies, the program hosts distinguished speakers each year, striking a balance between lecturers who are well-known outside of academia and scholars of Buddhist studies. For each distinguished speaker, the program offers an honorarium, and covers a portion of the event costs. In 2009, we were pleased to host Professor Jeffrey Hopkins and Sogyal Rinpoche.



Professor Jeffrey Hopkins is a distinguished American Tibetologist and Professor Emeritus of Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at the University of Virginia. He has authored more than twenty-five books about Tibetan Buddhism, among them the highly influential *Meditation on Emptiness*, which offers a pioneering exposition of early Indian Buddhist thought in the Tibetan Gelug tradition. Jeffrey

Hopkins spoke at UBC Asian's Centre and The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Society Temple (April 20 and 21, 2009).

During his talk, Professor Hopkins clarified the ways sex is used on the path of Tibetan Buddhism, and commented on the Dalai Lama's skillful blending of old and new in his Buddhist teachings. The two evening lectures, "Gender, Sexuality and Tibetan Buddhism: How Sex Is Used in the Spiritual Path", and "The Dalai Lama's Blending of "Classical" Tibetan Buddhism with Contemporary Outlooks" attracted over 300 people to UBC's Asian Centre and The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Society.

Sogyal Rinpoche is the best-selling author of *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (1992), and leader of the Tibetan Buddhist organization, Rigpa. Sogyal has had tremendous impact on popular knowledge of Buddhism around the world, especially through his influential book. The book is a reflection upon beliefs, rituals, and meditative practices related to the *bardo*, the Tibetan term referring to the liminal period between death and the next rebirth proposed by several Buddhist traditions. In Buddhism, the period leading up to death, the moment of death itself, and the liminal *bardo* are crucial times when the future of the transmigrating being may be affected.

Sogyal delighted his audience by introducing Tibetan Buddhist understandings of mind and meditative practice, commenting on how these impact contemporary society and relate to neuroscientific notions of mind. The two evening lectures, "Finding Peace and Stability in a Troubled World", and "The Heart Essence of Tibetan Buddhism" attracted over 900 people to the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts and Asian Centre. The event reports, photos, and video are available at: www.ubcbuddhism.wordpress.com.



Recent and upcoming major speakers include Professor Michael Zimmermann, who gave two lectures in 2010, and the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, who will give a major public lecture for over 3,000 people in 2011, made possible by The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation. In addition, we are currently in talks with Roshi Joan Halifax to organize lectures from January 14 to 16, 2011.

Members of the 2009 lecture committee included the Chair, Jessica Main, and Mr. Raymond Ho, representing The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation. Representing the Institute of Asian Research, we welcomed Professor Tsering Wangdu Shakya (Canada Research Chair in Religion and Contemporary Society of Asia), who organized all of the program events before the arrival of Jessica Main, including Sogyal Rinpoche's lectures. Representing the Department of Asian Studies, we welcomed Professor Don Baker, a specialist in Korean Religions. Ms. Kelly Pang, an observer for Mr. Robert Ho, and Mr. Larry Sproul, Director of Development at CFIS, also regularly join committee meetings.

PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to hosting the program's distinguished speakers, the Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program has begun to explore hosting more lectures through the infrastructure of the program, its growing local network, and its UBC campus partners (such as the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre). These events have little impact on the program's operating budget; however, they make a significant impact on its public image and community relationships.



In 2009, the program was pleased to host the Venerable Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, author, teacher, and monk of the Thai Forest Tradition, lectured at UBC's Asian Centre on September 15, 2009. He provided an engaging take on how the Buddha used questions—which kind of questions he used and which he refused to answer—based on sources from the Theravāda

Pāli Canon. The lecture drew 180 visitors to the Asian Centre.

Partnering with faculty within the Department of Asian Studies and the Institute of Asian Research continues to provide excellent opportunities to develop program events. The program has a history of fruitful collaboration, such as the 2008 conference on the Mongolian Buddhist Revival. This past year, The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program partnered with the Kameyama Lecture Series at Asian Studies to bring Professor John McRae to UBC. Professor McRae, a well-known scholar of Chinese Chan Buddhism, presented a lecture on early Chan history entitled, "Rethinking Bodhidharma and the Beginnings of Chinese Chan/Zen Buddhism," at the Asian Centre on February 4, 2010. The event was co-sponsored by the Kameyama Lecture Series, UBC Tzu Chi Buddhist Forum, Center for Chinese Research, and the Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program. The lecture drew approximately 50 students and faculty. Professor McRae proved to be quite entertaining as he combined careful textual analysis with his characteristic wit.

As a student of East Asian Buddhism, Professor McRae is especially interested in ideologies of spiritual cultivation and how they interact with their intellectual and cultural environments. His research on the earliest period of Chinese Chan or Zen Buddhism, was conducted under the guidance of Professor Stanley Weinstein (Yale), with direction from Yanagida Seizan in Kyoto. He has published *The Northern School and the Formation of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism* (1986), and a companion volume, *Evangelical Zen: Shenhui (684-758), Sudden Enlightenment, and the Southern School of Chinese Chan*

Buddhism, and is now in the final stages of preparation. His work, *Chinese Chan tradition: Encounter and Transformation: Genealogy, Self-cultivation, and Monastic Tradition in Chinese Zen Buddhism* (2003), has changed how scholars think about the Chinese Chan tradition.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program's upcoming conference "Buddhism in Canada: Global Causes, Local Conditions" (October 15 to 17, 2010), has received almost 30 paper proposals. The organizing committee, Jessica Main, Victor Hori (McGill University), John Harding (University of Lethbridge), and Alexander Soucy (Saint Mary's University), is creating a full, two-day academic conference schedule of panels and a keynote address. The evening keynote address will be advertised, free and open to the public. Members of the public may also register to attend panels at no cost.

In addition to program funds, a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada has been secured. The program will receive approximately \$8,000 dollars to cover conference expenses such as aid to graduate student presenters, funding for keynote speakers, catering, administrative expenses, publication of proceedings, and so forth. The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program is also fortunate to receive approximately \$4,000 in additional funding from the Numata Foundation, which will go towards funding graduate student presenters.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program held a workshop with representatives of local communities entitled, "Workshop: Connecting with Vancouver Buddhist Communities," on December 15, 2009. More than 25 leaders and organizers from different Buddhist communities in the Vancouver area, including those affiliated with Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Southeast Asian Theravada, Tibetan, and Engaged Buddhist traditions, gathered at UBC. Discussions ranged from the possibility of holding joint academic and religious events, to building a network within the community for social activities. As a result, the program will provide a mailing list and community calendar. It is hoped that these new connections will bear fruit in the future, perhaps in a series of activities planned to coincide with the "Buddhism in Canada" conference in October 2010. The group held their second, follow-up meeting on May 27, 2010, at Steveston Buddhist Temple. Reports for each meeting, a list of group participants, and our public community calendar are available on our website.



FACULTY AND STUDENT RESEARCH

In July of 2009, Jessica Main was appointed to The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation Chair. This year, Ms. Main had the opportunity to explore connections between Buddhism and sexual medicine and physician's ethics, between Buddhism and neuroethics, and lastly, between Buddhism and discourses of sustainability, including sustainability of the human body, human culture, and the natural world. She continues her work on Japanese Shin Buddhist institutional ethics and responses to the social issues of discrimination and human rights. She has been invited to be a guest editor for a special issue of the journal *The Eastern Buddhist* on "Socially Engaged Buddhism", to appear in 2012.

Graduate students who took the Buddhism and Contemporary Society seminar produced excellent research papers on a variety of subjects. These include:

- In the late Edo period, and at the beginning of the modern period in Japan, changes in popular Buddhist pilgrimage practices revealed how local temples either resisted

or did not reflect central government policy. In many cases, government attempts to control or suppress Buddhist practices were not fully implemented at the local level.

- In the 1950s in the Kham region of Tibet, pockets of resistance to the recent Chinese regime remained. The patterns of Buddhist justifications revealed a higher moral legitimacy for defense rather than aggression, and a continuing critique of any violent activity.

Other students examined such topics as the ideological implications of utopian and ecological images in Nichiren Buddhist-inspired literature of prewar Japan (1930s and 1940s), the state of contemporary Cambodian Buddhism in the years following the fall of the Pol Pot regime (1979 to the present), as well as the proselytization activities of Japanese Shin Buddhism in Korea during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945).

A GLOBAL NETWORK

The program has identified key areas for growth and development, the first of which is



our online presence. The strategy over the next few years is to grow our web-content using the portable and well-supported Wordpress framework. This content will be linked to social media (Twitter and Facebook), and be accessible in several different formats (RSS, email subscription, and web-browsing).

When added to our existing email list for events, the program's new online presence will help us develop into the future.

Online highlights:

- Interview with Sogyal Rinpoche. A short, cleanly-edited video summarizing key points from his UBC lectures and his thoughts on university education. (<http://ubcbuddhism.wordpress.com/2009/12/26/229/>).
- Asia Pacific Memo (<http://www.asiapacificmemo.ca/>). Jessica Main is a member of the editorial committee for this experiment in scholarly communication. It is a twice-weekly blog on topics of contemporary relevance in Asia and the Asia Pacific region—including contemporary Buddhism.

The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program's second key area is event and project management. The program will continue to work with other groups on campus, such as UBC Conferences and Accommodation, the Institute of Asian Research, College for Interdisciplinary Studies, and the Faculty of Arts, to reduce costs and efficiently organize events.

Our third area for growth and development is networking. Foremost amongst our networking opportunities is with other educational institutions sponsored by The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation and the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation. The first step towards such a network was at the "Global Networking Meeting" hosted by The Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation Center for Buddhist Studies at Stanford University. We look forward to opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with our sister institutions and the potential this network has for enhancing teaching, research, and public events. Additionally, The Buddhism and Contemporary Society Program will pursue on-campus links with groups like the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre and off-campus links with Buddhist-inspired NGOs such as the Dalai Lama Centre for Peace and Education.

OUR APPRECIATION



"There is a new generation of Buddhist Studies scholars who work on the contemporary period. Yet, these scholars rarely have the institutional support to pursue research and teaching on Buddhism and society today. The generosity of The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation and Mr. Robert Ho has changed the world of Buddhist Studies at UBC, with their commitment to the study of Buddhism—not just in the past— but in the present. I am very grateful to be here to witness the impact of their support on students, faculty, and the community."

~ Jessica Main, The Tung Lin Kok Yuen Canada Foundation Chair in Buddhism and Contemporary Society.