

University of Lethbridge

John Harding

John Harding, Associate Professor, Religious Studies and Coordinator for Asian Studies at the University of Lethbridge is one of three collaborators working on a research project supported by a recently awarded five-year SSHRC Insight Grant (\$258,659). Harding will be working with Alexander Soucy, Associate Professor and Chair of Religious Studies at St. Mary's University, and Victor Sōgen Hori, Associate Professor in Religious Studies at McGill University, on a project titled "The modernization of Buddhism in global perspective."

Buddhism in Canada is represented by a diversity of forms that originate in various Asian countries, like Japan, China, Vietnam and Sri Lanka. There are also a number of groups, mostly made up of non-Asians, who have converted to Buddhism or were born to convert families. It is clear is that the way almost all of these groups practice Buddhism differs from the ways it was traditionally practiced in Asia a hundred and fifty years ago. It is not so clear, though, in what ways it is changing and why.

The common hypothesis goes something like this: just as Buddhism travelled from India to China and was transformed through adaptation to Chinese culture, and just as Buddhism travelled to Japan and changed to become more Japanese, so, too, will Buddhism change in the West to adapt to Western culture. Much Western scholarship on Buddhism in places like America and Europe (studies on Buddhism in Canada are only just getting started) has taken this premise as a starting point and then sought to document how Buddhism is adapting to the West.

In 2013, Harding, Hori, and Soucy were awarded a substantial SSHRC grant to challenge this premise. They want to show that the changes we see taking place in all Buddhist communities in Canada are not so much a result of Buddhism becoming Canadianized, but because of a global transformation of Buddhism, of which Buddhism in Canada is a part. The project, titled "The Modernization of Buddhism in Global Perspective," will start by looking at the early conversations of Buddhist reform movements that grew up in various Asian countries as a response to Western colonial pressures and aggressive Christian missionization. It will then show that many of the transformations we see taking place in Canada emerge from these early reforms. In the latter half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, these changes are accelerating because of the increase in population movement and global communication.

The SSHRC grant started in 2013 and runs for five years. A major component of the grant is an international conference planned for 2016.

University of Toronto

Christoph Emmrich

The UofT/McMaster Numata Program facilitated the following events: In Fall 2012, Shaman Hatley (Concordia) talked about “The figure of the yoginī in the Tantric traditions of Medieval India” and Matthew Kapstein (Chicago/Paris) spoke on “Buddhist idealism in a Jaina perspective”. In Spring, 2013, Robert Campany (Vanderbilt) presented “The Incredible Vanishing Religion: Glimmers of Buddhist Imagination from Medieval China”, while Geoffrey Samuel (Cardiff) contextualized one of his works on Tibetan longevity rituals; Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (Lausanne) discussed her article “Tibet: An Archaeology of the Written” and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (LMU Munich) fielded questions about his study, “The Early Growth of Buddhism in India”. Fall 2013 saw Justin McDaniel (UPenn) sharing his work-in-progress on how (or how not) to study the Buddhist ornamental art of Thailand from a textual perspective and Alexander von Rospatt (UCBerkeley) described his ongoing research on the Kathmandu Valley Svayambhūcaitya, its origins and its sponsorship by King Pratapa Malla.

In Spring 2013, Jason Neelis (Wilfried Laurier) spoke on the impact of long-distance mobility and cross-cultural transmission between South Asia and Southeast Asia on Buddhism. In Fall 2013, the annual Lecture in the Arts, Histories, Literatures, and Religions of Burma, hosted by the Southeast Asian Studies Seminar, was delivered by Chie Ikeya (Rutgers), who spoke about her new research on intermarriage, religion, race, and nation in Burma (Myanmar). The Centre for Southeast Asian Studies also hosted Anne Hansen (Wisconsin) who reflected on death, love, and moral vision in viewing a modernist Khmer depiction of the Buddha’s *mahāparinibbāna*.

Geoffrey Samuel (Cardiff) was the Tung Lin Kok Yuen (TLKY) Distinguished Visiting Professor in Buddhist Studies at the University of Toronto, Scarborough, in 2012-13. He taught undergraduate courses, supported graduate students in their ongoing research projects, led an undergraduate/graduate workshop, gave a talk on Buddhism and globalization, and organized a conference on Buddhism and science. Since Fall 2013, the position is held by Amy Holmes Tagchungdarpa and Kalzang Tagchungdarpa. April 5-6, 2013, Amy Holmes Tagchungdarpa