The Way of the Bachelor

A lecture and reading by
Alison R. Marshall, Department of Religion, Brandon University

Wednesday, April 6, 7–8:30 pm, Room 7000, SFU Vancouver, 515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver
Free and Open to the Public. Please reserve online at: www.sfu.ca/reserve

“The Way of the Bachelor is a beautiful, deeply moving portrait of the lived experience of Chinese immigrants in Manitoba. Through carefully nuanced historical and ethnographic analyses, Marshall explores the everyday practices and rituals through which these immigrants defined and transformed their relationships to each other and their community. Her book opens up a host of new perspectives on Chinese religions in practice and on the immigrant experience.”

— Michael Puett, author of To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China

“The Way of the Bachelor enriches our understanding of the Chinese immigrant experience by drawing attention to the life of these new Canadians outside of coastal areas or large urban centres. The harsh environment of the prairies and the paucity of population provided a unique social context for Chinese immigrants. Marshall provides an intimate and moving portrayal of the lives of these individuals, drawing on local newspapers, interviews, and various archival materials. Her book will be appreciated by scholars, while being very accessible to students and the general readers.”

— Paul Crowe, Director, David Lam Centre, Simon Fraser University

The lives of early Japanese and Chinese settlers in British Columbia have come to define the Asian experience in Canada. Yet many men travelled beyond British Columbia to settle in small Prairie towns and cities. Chinese bachelors opened the region’s first laundries and Chinese cafe. They maintained ties to the Old World and negotiated a place in the new by fostering a vibrant homosocial culture based on friendship, everyday religious practices, the example of Sun Yat-sen, and the sharing of food. This exploration of the intersection of gender and migration in rural Canada, in particular, offers new takes on the Chinese quest for identity in North America, in general. With a preface by the Honourable Inky Mark, former Member of Parliament for Dauphin-Swan River-Marquette.

Alison R. Marshall is an Associate Professor in the Department of Religion at Brandon University. Marshall’s current SSHRC funded research examines overseas Chinese religious encounters and early prairie settlements. Her aim is to create a more complicated history of Chinese Canadian life by collecting and preserving oral histories, photographs and documents. Dr. Marshall is also a board member of the Winnipeg Chinese Cultural and Community Centre. Recent scholarly works include “Everyday Religion and Identity in a Western Manitoban Chinese Community: Christianity, The KMT, Foodways and Related Events.” The Journal of the American Academy of Religion 77.3 (September 2009) and The Way of the Bachelor: Early Chinese Settlement in Manitoba (UBC press, 2011). She is currently writing a book on Diaspora Confucianism from 1911 to 1949 in Manitoba and Saskatchewan that examines Chinese Canadian masculinity, as well as Christian and political involvements.