PUBLIC LECTURE

‘Law and Religion in Traditional and Contemporary China’

When: Tuesday, 6 July 2010 at 2.00-3.30pm

Where: University of Adelaide, Ligertwood Building (Law School), Lecture Theatre 1

Speaker: Benny YT TAI (戴耀廷) is Associate Professor of Law at the University of Hong Kong, specializing in constitutional law, administrative law, human rights law and law and religion and has published extensively in these areas. His current research projects include rule of law and legal culture, political legitimacy and constitutional development, governance and law, and law and religion.

Synopsis: Historically, three religions played a role in traditional China: two home-grown (Confucianism and Daoism) and one imported (Buddhism). Because each of the three religions were less organized and more diffuse, perceiving law and state in different ways, their interaction with law in China is unlike similar interactions in the West. While over time they competed with each other for dominance, they ultimately integrated in a syncretised form. Still, no matter which religion and in what form dominated, religion was at all times a legitimizing tool of the dynastic monarchs. Understanding this history has implications for the contemporary relationship between law and religion in China. While the concepts of law and state in China may have undergone fundamental changes, the relationship between law and religion might have changed little since traditional times. Chinese Communist rule, at various times, has attempted to marginalize or even to eliminate religion; yet, the legitimising function of religion may once again be emerging in the modern governance of China, especially in light of the moral vacuum in Chinese society following the collapse of the ‘civil religion’ of Communism. This lecture will examine the nature of law and religion in traditional and contemporary China and explore how far the interactions between the two are different in the traditional and contemporary ages. It will look into the factors that may explain the similarities or contribute to the dissimilarities.

Registration: This lecture is free but registration is essential. Please RSVP by 1 July to Peter Burdon, peter.d.burdon@adelaide.edu.au

Jointly sponsored by the Asian Studies Association of Australia 18th Biennial Conference 2010
CRICOS Provider Number 00123M

www.adelaide.edu.au/lawandreligion