

Rice and Language Symposium organizing committee



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Rice and Language Across Asia: Crops, Movement and Social Change International Symposium, September 22-25, 2011

Building on the long-standing tradition of rice studies at Cornell, this interdisciplinary symposium grew out of a collaborative project initiated by Laurent Sagart during his time as a visiting professor at Cornell in Linguistics, with support from the Southeast Asia Program. The connection he made with Susan McCouch has expanded to include scholars from across the Cornell campus. The symposium will bring together archeologists, geneticists, and linguists from Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America.

The goal of this symposium is to examine the relationship between the beginnings and spread of rice agriculture and cultural and linguistic developments of early Asian societies. The timing of the symposium is motivated by rapid advances in the fields of language reconstruction and subgrouping, human and plant genetics, archaeobotany, and related subfields of archaeological research. The symposium will focus on the complex relationship between crops, language, and sociocultural developments in early South, Southeast, and East Asia.

Special attention will be paid to the role of rice, as a highly significant, dominant crop in early agricultural transformations and expansions across Asia, and to how human populations were impacted and societies changed as a result of the introduction and development of rice farming. A focal question of the symposium is the relationship between the distribution of major language families and their subgroups in Asia and the spread of rice cultivation, which we also hope to examine in relation to theoretical issues such as the conceptions of "language family" and "population" across disciplines.

Open to all members of the Cornell community and other interested scholars and students. Participation in the symposium is free, but **preregistration is required.**

Conference website: <http://conf.ling.cornell.edu/riceandlanguage/>

For more information, email: riceandlanguage@cornell.edu

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NEW COURSE! **Rice and Language: Geography, Movement, and Exchange**

ANTH 4495, ARKEO 4495, IARD 4495,
LING 4495, co-meets with ANTH 7495,
ARKEO 7495, LING 7495

Instructor and course coordinator:
Magnus Fiskesjö, Anthropology

Co-instructors: Abby Cohn (Dept. of Linguistics;
Southeast Asia Program), John Whitman (Dept. of
Linguistics; East Asia Program), Susan McCouch
(Dept. of Plant Breeding and Genetics), and
Randy Barker (Dept. of Applied Economics and
Management; Southeast Asia Program; retired)

In recent years numerous breakthroughs have been made in the study of early human history and the formidable role of agriculture in that story. New insights in several disciplines have cast new light on areas previously believed to lie outside of the reach of science. Taking early crop domestication and agricultural expansions and parallel socio-cultural and linguistic developments such as migration and language diversification among early peoples of Asia as a special focus, we will consider evidence from the study of geography, water, rice domestication, plant genetics, human genetics, language, and identity and social change. We will pay special attention to the conversation between disciplines, to how data and insights can be compared from different disciplines, and how the significance of new insights can be enhanced in the light of the theories and methods in different academic disciplines. The focus is Asian rice, but geographically the course has numerous, worldwide comparative dimensions.

Other planned guest lecturers include: James Scott, Yale University (AD White Professor-at-large at Cornell); Laurent Sagart, CRNS, Paris (Visiting Professor in Linguistics at Cornell in 2006-07); Spencer Wells, Director, Genographic Project, National Geographic Society (Frank H.T. Rhodes Class of '56 Professor at Cornell)