

The ASU Confucius Institute presents

Revising Chinese Etymologies

A Lexicographic Journey
through the American
Heritage Dictionary

Dr. Zev Handel

*Department of Asian Language and Literature of
University of Washington*

Friday, November 6, 2009

4:30 pm - 6:00 pm • LL Room 104

Professor Zev Handel received his PhD in Chinese from the University of California at Berkeley and is currently Associate Professor of Chinese linguistics at the University of Washington in Seattle. He has published in the fields of Chinese historical phonology, Sino-Tibetan comparison, and Chinese dialectology. His book *Old Chinese Medials and Their Sino-Tibetan Origins* will be published this winter by Academia Sinica in Taiwan. His current research project is a comparative study of the adaptation of Chinese characters in the earliest writing systems of Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

In July of 2007, Dr. Handel was contacted by an editor at the American Heritage Dictionary. He was seeking help in revising and improving the etymologies for the 173 words in the dictionary that can be ultimately traced back to a Chinese origin, words like chopstick, ginkgo, and typhoon. The etymologies of these words touch on many fascinating questions concerning word history and the interaction of Chinese with other languages. In this presentation, Dr. Handel will give examples of some of the words in the dictionary with Chinese etymologies, and discuss the delights and challenges that they present to the etymologist. A handout listing 25 etymologies will be circulated before the presentation; attendees are encouraged to examine it beforehand and bring questions and comments for discussion. The handout of Dr. Handel's talk can be downloaded at <http://confuciusinstitute.asu.edu/node/164>.

Please RSVP by November 4 to Zhixin Dong, Zhixin.dong@asu.edu

