



Read the Winter 2022 Regional Studies—East Asia Department Newsletter below or [as a PDF](#).

Committee on Regional Studies – East Asia Newsletter Winter 2022

Letter from the Chair



Dear Alumni of Harvard University's Regional Studies East Asia (RSEA) Program,

As I write this letter (on February 1) it is bewildering to consider that on this very day two years ago, the first case of Covid-19 in Massachusetts was confirmed, and life at the university was upended just over a month later. Since then, time has appeared warped - intermittently never-ending and passing by in a flash.

Some of this time distortion has to do with the changes to the spaces we predominantly work in or the reduction in social encounters over a regular day. Some of it has to do with a palpable sense of exhaustion from the many adjustments that have been necessary.

For RSEA students, it has been a roller-coaster ride. Some graduated a few months into the pandemic after suddenly having to switch to online courses in the spring of 2020. Most first-year students saw their summer research plans made impossible and had to completely re-envision their thesis projects. And those entering the program in the fall of 2020 spent their entire first year in the program taking online courses, only physically coming to campus for fall 2021.

These were serious challenges that could have derailed many students, even with the added support and flexibility the program has worked hard to provide. For which it's important to acknowledge the tireless efforts of Professor Jie Li (Director of Graduate Studies), Rose Cortese (Program Administrator), and Harriet Wong (Staff Assistant, who sadly left the program, and we wish her all the best) for their support of the students.

Yet, RSEA students persevered and excelled. The graduating cohort of 2021 saw more Fletcher Award-nominated and awarded theses than ever before in RSEA history. Students found ways to pursue the questions they thought important. And they found ways to deal with the very real exhaustion and to counter the challenges of studying, at times, in near-isolation from their peers with added efforts to connect: to gather for film screenings, writing sessions, or social events - first virtual, and once it became possible in person. With their grit and positive energy, they have deeply impressed everyone in the program administration and the faculty they came into contact with.

While the situation remains serious and the future is difficult to predict, the data suggests that the Omicron peak in Massachusetts passed earlier last month; the many of the disruptions we feared for the start of the semester have not come to pass. Nonetheless, we must remain vigilant and careful in what is still a serious situation with high rates of infection. Members of the RSEA community all over the world are seriously affected by the pandemic in myriad ways.

Yet, as we enter the Year of the Tiger there is reason for optimism. Even if the pandemic is not over yet, we are reaffirmed and reenergized by seeing the truly amazing achievements of students in the program. And we hope you look forward to additional opportunities this spring to celebrate the RSEA program in its now 75th year - more on that soon.

We have benefited greatly from the support and advice from alumni throughout these difficult times, often in ways that directly impacted students. We are immensely grateful for your continued involvement in RSEA. As always, we would be delighted to hear from you with any comments or suggestions you may have for future issues of this newsletter or ideas you might have as we develop the RSEA program in new directions. Please feel free to write to me directly at azahlten@fas.harvard.edu.

Happy Lunar New Year!

Sincerely,
Alex Zahlten

RSEA Student News

Congratulations to Wei Li and Yunhui Yang, who both received their AM degree in November 2021.

Wei Li studied Buddho-Daoist interaction and her thesis project, *"The Scripture on Inner Observation by the Most High Lord Lao,"* included an annotated translation of the Buddhist technical terms in a Daoist text. Wei is currently working at Harvard for the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies.

Yunhui Yang studied late imperial Chinese history and wrote a thesis titled, *"Institutions and Governance: Early Ming Frontier Administration in Liaodong, Guizhou, and Jiaozhi."* He is now in a History PhD program at UC San Diego.

This year's Noma-Reischauer Prizes were awarded to current RSEA student, Ms. Chihiro Ishikawa and RSEA Alumni Ms. Yingxue Wang (AM '19), currently a doctoral student in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, Harvard University. **Congratulations Chihiro and Yingxue!**

Current student Hannah Baek has just completed an internship with Mubi, a streaming service for cinema lovers.

RSEA student Sophie Lei is working on the academic research team for a new Harvard CAMLab project, Digital Gandhari <https://digitalgandhara.com/>.

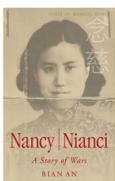
RSEA's AB/AM degree student John Ferguson has been named a 2023 Schwarzman scholar. The Crimson article with more information may be found [here](#). **Congratulations John!**

2021 RSEA Alumni Panel

Held virtually on October 28, 2021, this year's annual Alumni Panel event brought together over 50 members of the RSEA community of alumni, current students, faculty and staff. All appreciated the chance to connect and to hear about the diverse career paths of four Alumni Panelists, who reflected on their time in RSEA and offered encouragement to current students. Thank you to Becky Bae (AM '14), Annika Culver (AM '00), John Fei (AM '97), and Chiho Sawada (AM '93) for sharing your experiences and careers advice.

Read more about the 2021 RSEA Alumni Panel event at <https://rsea.fas.harvard.edu/news/2021-alumni-panel-connects-rsea-community>.

Alumni News in Brief



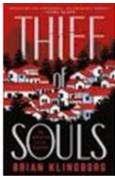
Anne Bennett Spence (AM '69) pen name Bian An recently published a novel, *Nancy/Nianci: A Story of Wars*.

Jack Meng Tat Chia's (AM '11) recent book *Monks in Motion* has just been awarded the EuroSEAS Humanities Book Prize for 2021. The EuroSEAS Humanities Book Prize is given biennially to the best academic book on Southeast Asia published in the humanities – including archaeology, art history, history, literature, performing arts, and religious studies (<https://euroseas2021.org/program/book-prize>).

Congratulations to Nike Drake (AM '16) for starting a new position as Senior Transfer Credit Specialist at Champlain College.

Uri Ferruccio (AM '12) has just taken a position as Vice President for Business Development at Binance (Also, Uri is happy to inform us that he is hiring!)

Freelance writer Helen Yuxin Gao's (AM '16) recent NYTimes editorial piece *"China's Ban on Sissy Men' Is Bound to Backfire"* can be found in the [NYTimes.com](#). She is also a contributor to [foreignpolicy.com](#) where you can find her recent article *China's Generation of Only Children Wants the Same for Their Kids*.



Brian Klingborg's (AM '92) recent novel *"Thief of Souls: An Inspector Lu Fei Mystery,"* is about a Chinese Inspector from Beijing exiled to a small, sleepy town in Northern China facing a brutal murder and old enemies.

Dr. Cheryl Martin (AM '06) has a new practice as an Attending Physician Family Medicine BronxCare, Bronx, NY.

Lev Navarre Chao (AM '20) is now working for Rand as a "Policy Analyst" working on China-facing issues within the Defense and Political Sciences Department.

Daniel Joseph (AM '16) has two new translations out: *Rip It Up* by Kou Machida, from Inpatient Press, and the memoir, *Try Saying You're Alive! Kazuki Tomokawa in His Own Words*, published by Blank Forms along with reissues of the singer's first three albums, for which Daniel also translated the lyrics and liner notes. He is also currently working as a staff editor at Vertical, an imprint of Kodansha USA.

Yifei Shi (AM '16) started a new position as Director of Gaming Partnerships at Klaytn Foundation.

Jiyoung Sohn (AM '21) has recently joined The Wall Street Journal as a Tech Reporter.

Rebecca Victor (AM '17) has started a new position as Marketing Director at Fanhouse.

Tsugumichi Watanabe (AM '78) has a new position in a Japanese law firm, Tokyo, Japan.

Harriet Wong (AM '97) joined the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies as their new Program Coordinator after five wonderful years working in the RSEA and IAAS Programs.



Szuhwa Wu (AM '03) of the Victor Hugo Orchestra was instrumental in the development of the POTE festival held in à Besançon, France.

Ivanna Sang Een Yi (AM '11, PhD '18) is now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell University where she'll be teaching an Introduction to Korea course in the Spring.

Send us your news! We love hearing about the new ventures, positions, publications, relocations, and life milestones of our RSEA alumni. Please write to rsea2@fas.harvard.edu with news you'd like to share with the RSEA community.



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