



**Committee on Regional Studies – East Asia**  
**Newsletter**  
Summer 2021

**Letter from the Chair**

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

Hopefully you are well and have had a safe and restorative summer.

For RSEA students this is an especially exciting moment, as we get ready to return to campus after a most extraordinary year. In fact, after a year of classes “together,” many students will meet face-to-face for the first time and be on campus for in-person instruction for the first time.

The RSEA team has been working closely with the students - most are arriving in Cambridge from all over the world - to help them navigate visa processes and flight cancellations and provide information on the many new regulations for being on-campus safely as the pandemic continues. I want to highlight the exceptional work our administrative team Rosie Cortese and Harriet Wong have been doing to manage all of this and support the students.

The program made many adjustments during the past three pandemic semesters to make RSEA the rewarding experience it is meant to be. Some proved so successful the program will consider keeping them in place. For example, the increased flexibility on the thesis format was accompanied by a bumper crop of graduation projects - and resulted in more Fletcher Award nominees and honorable mentions than ever before in RSEA history. That the graduating class of 2021 did this amid all of the pandemic's challenges for research and writing is nothing less than astounding, and we salute their resilience.

I also want to express gratitude to James Robson - whom we should all thank for the extraordinarily careful and quick-thinking stewardship of the program over the last two unprecedented years. As I transition into the role of chair, Rosie and Harriet have been nimbly adjusting to all of these remarkable challenges and are making that transition as smooth as possible. And since my main area of study is film and media we will definitely continue with film screenings this coming year (which for the last year have been organized as online social events with the help of RSEA student Hannah Baek).

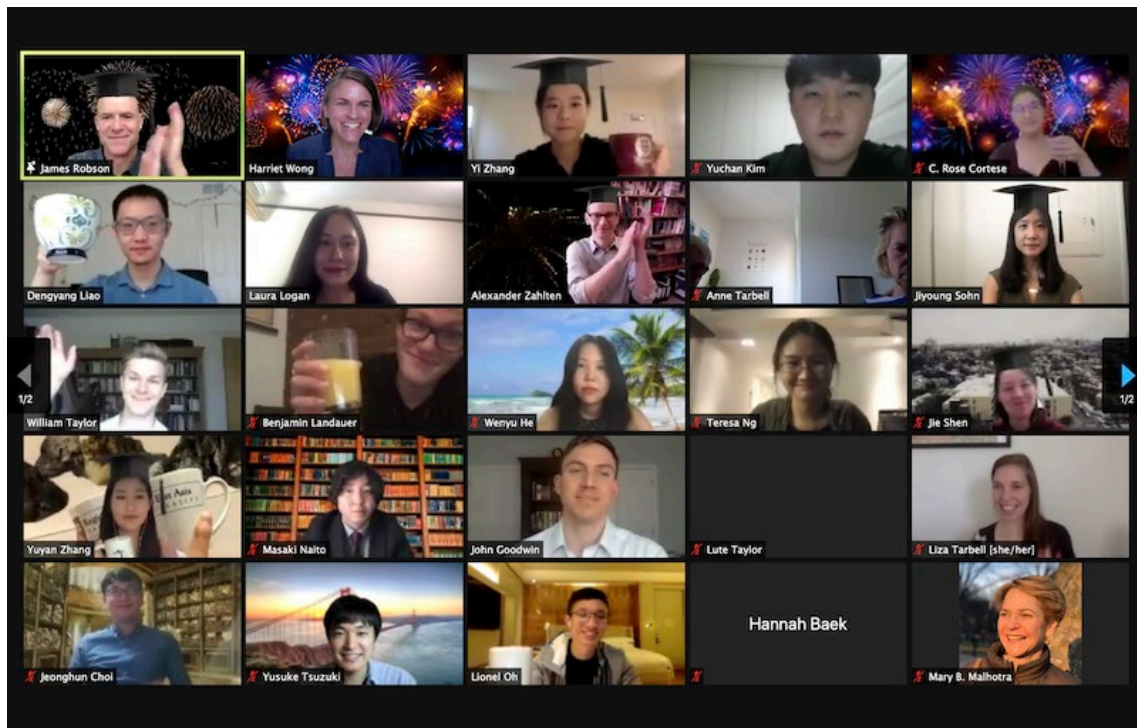
But RSEA is not just adjusting to the various rapid-fire challenges. We have many new projects and big plans. And we also have a 75th anniversary to look forward to! There are many things on the horizon as we strive to make RSEA the most inspiring, inclusive, and intellectually satisfying program it can be.

Sincerely,

Alex Zahlten  
RSEA Committee Chair  
Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations

### RSEA Commencement 2021

On May 26 RSEA held an online [Commencement Celebration](#) in honor of the graduating Class of 2021. Then RSEA Chair Prof. James Robson and Director of Graduate Studies Prof. Alex Zahlten praised the resilience and brilliance of all the students, who not only completed their courses and degree requirements under challenging circumstances but also produced excellent work -- in spite of obstacles such as limited access to campus, libraries, and archives.



The twenty-one recipients of the AM degree in Regional Studies East Asia were named during the May 27 online [GSAS Graduation Recognition Ceremony](#).

**Elizabeth Tarbell (RSEA '21)** was named a 2021 Commencement Marshal to represent Master's students. Commencement Marshals are nominated by students, faculty and staff and then selected by the Graduate Student Council for their service to the graduate student community. Liza was one of eight GSAS Marshals recognized by Dean of Students Sam Bersola during the May 2021 GSAS Graduation Recognition Ceremony.



### *RSEA Class of 2021*

*Latifa Al Saud  
Yufan Chen  
Jeonghun Choi  
John Goodwin  
Wenyu He  
Yuchan Kim (March 2021)  
Benjamin Landauer  
Laura Logan  
Masaki Naito  
Teresa Ng  
Bridget Nicholas*

*Lionel Oh  
Brian Park  
Quade Robinson  
Jie Shen  
Jiyoung Sohn  
Elizabeth Tarbell  
William Taylor  
Yusuke Tsuzuki  
Yi Zhang  
Yuyan Zhang*

Congratulations to the Class of 2021, and welcome to the RSEA alumni community! With post-graduation plans ranging from government posts, business management training, law school and PhD programs, we wish them all continuing success in their careers.

### **2021 Fletcher Awards**

During the virtual RSEA Commencement Celebration on May 26, Professors Robson and Zahlten presented the 2021 Joseph Fletcher Memorial Awards to a record-breaking number of students. Established in 1985, the Fletcher Awards are given for excellence in a Master's research thesis. This year, eleven students received an Honorable Mention and three students received a Fletcher Award for an outstanding RSEA thesis. Each of the three Fletcher prize winners was introduced by their thesis advisor, who described their research project and commended their adaptability and contribution to the field.

2021 Fletcher Prize awardees, thesis title and advisor:

Jeonghun Choi	<i>"Popularization of Historical Knowledge in Meiji Japan: Writers of Hakubunkan and Bankoku Senshi (Universal History of Wars)"</i>	Prof. Andy Gordon
Yuchan Kim	<i>"The Deadly Art of Survival: Elite Purges in North Korea"</i>	Prof. Sung-Yoon Lee
Yi Zhang	<i>"Myriad Images: Illustrated Books and Media Ecologies in the Late Ming"</i>	Prof. Tom Kelly

2021 Fletcher Honorable Mentions:

Latifa Al Saud, John Goodwin, Benjamin Landauer, Masaki Naito, Teresa Ng, Bridget Nicholas, Quade Robinson, Jiyoung Sohn, Liza Tarbell, Will Taylor, Yuyan Zhang.

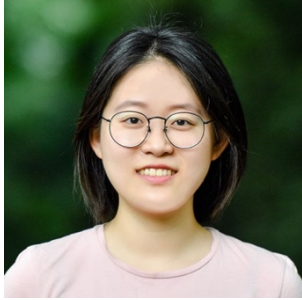
The RSEA website has a complete list of [2021 Fletcher Awards and Honorable Mentions](#) recipients' thesis titles and advisors.

### **RSEA Student News**

Following a competitive admissions process, 24 new students will join the program in Fall 2021. This number includes ten students admitted in 2020 who deferred for a year due to the pandemic. Our incoming students have stellar academic backgrounds and varied areas of interest. We look forward to welcoming the new cohort for their RSEA Orientation in late August. It is especially exciting that they can travel to Harvard!

We also look forward to seeing our returning RSEA students, who participated remotely in their courses and program activities last year. All continuing students will be included in RSEA orientation events as we welcome them to campus.

**Kuo Jiang** was featured in the [Harvard-Yenching Institute's](#) June newsletter. Kuo is a HYI Fellowship recipient returning for her second year in the RSEA program:



“[Kuo Jiang](#) is an A.M. student in Harvard's Regional Studies - East Asia (RSEA) program interested in legacies of Maoism in Chinese literature in the post-socialist era. Her interest in modern Chinese literature began in the early days of her undergraduate studies. “It traces back to the first modern Chinese literature class I took. It was really about how modern Chinese literature got entangled with traditional Chinese literature and also foreign literature. It was transnational and also a field that connects the past with the present.” [Learn more about Kuo and her research.](#)”

## 2021 HEAS Conference

Congratulations to the Harvard East Asia Society student organizing committee for hosting a very successful HEAS Conference! The 24th annual HEAS Conference was held online for the first time, opening up new possibilities and enabling over 100 scholars to take part in the two-day virtual event held February 27-28, 2021.

In his opening remarks, RSEA Chair Professor James Robson commented on the value of interdisciplinary and interpersonal connections in scholarship. He noted that since 1997 the HEAS conferences have enabled young scholars to engage with renowned scholars across many fields in East Asian studies, forging new ideas and new connections.

In two Keynote Dialogues, professors from Harvard and other universities shared insights on the theme of *Mobility and Control Across East Asia*, resulting in rich conversations to kick off and wrap up the conference. Over the course of the two days, HEAS members moderated eight panel sessions, in which graduate students from many universities presented their research and received encouraging feedback from faculty discussants.

At the close of the event, RSEA Director of Graduate Studies Professor Alex Zahlten thanked and congratulated the first-year RSEA students who organized the conference, including HEAS Co-Chairs Sophie Lei and Ziyi Lin, and all members of the 2021 HEAS Committee.

24th Annual Harvard East Asia  
Society Conference

**MOVING  
BODIES**  
MOBILITY AND CONTROL  
ACROSS EAST ASIA

FEB.27-28.2021 (Virtual)

For More Information Visit:  
<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/heasconference/home>

HEAS Committee

Sophie Lei  
Ziyi Lin  
David Li  
April Peng  
Joy Wu  
Jacob Williams  
Mayako Liu  
Annie Zhanling Wang  
Kuo Jiang  
Yufan Chen

## HEAS is turning 25!

This academic year 2021-22 will see the 25<sup>th</sup> annual HEAS Conference! We look forward to seeing how this year's student organizing committee decide to mark the milestone.

As we reflect on twenty-five years of the student-led Harvard East Asia Society, we would love to connect with alumni who were involved in HEAS during their time in RSEA. If you were a HEAS co-chair or committee member, please get in touch! Email [rsea2@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:rsea2@fas.harvard.edu). We'd love to hear when and how you were involved, what you recall, and what HEAS meant to you.

## RSEA Events

Planning is underway for the **2021 RSEA Alumni Panel** in late October. Due to ongoing COVID precautions restricting visitors to campus, the Alumni Panel will again be held online. Last fall we were thrilled that the virtual format allowed so many alumni from further regions and continents to take part. We look forward to this year's Alumni Panel, which is always an enjoyable gathering of the RSEA community and a helpful opportunity for current students to hear careers stories and tips from the alumni panelists. Please watch your email for an invitation with details of the event and how to join us.

## 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

As noted in previous newsletters, RSEA is approaching an exciting anniversary! The program dates back to 1946 when renowned China scholar John King Fairbank launched a full-time seminar leading to a master's degree known as Regional Studies China; the seminar was later expanded to include Japan, Korea and Vietnam, and became the A.M. program known as Regional Studies East Asia. During this academic year 2021-2022, we will be reaching out to

many of you regarding some virtual or regional opportunities to reconnect, with the hope of being able to hold an event at Harvard in 2022-23. As we plan to celebrate this milestone we look forward to the participation and support of many RSEA alumni around the world. We will keep you informed as planning continues and we welcome your suggestions. Please feel free to write to [rsea2@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:rsea2@fas.harvard.edu) to discuss ideas for the anniversary.

## Faculty News

We were saddened to hear that **Theodore (Ted) Bestor**, Reischauer Professor of Social Anthropology and Japanese Studies, passed away on July 1<sup>st</sup> after a long illness. Professor Bestor was a leader in Anthropology and Asian Studies and will be remembered by many RSEA students and alumni. Read the [Harvard Anthropology Department's "In Memoriam: Theodore C. Bestor."](#)

**Susan Pharr**, Edwin O Reischauer Professor of Japanese Politics was honored at a "[Japan in the World](#)" Symposium held on May 25 to mark her retirement. The day-long virtual event consisted of three panel discussions and closing remarks by Professor Pharr. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Department of Government, the Weatherhead Center Program on U.S.-Japan Relations, and the Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies.

## Alumni News in Brief

*Congratulations to all RSEA alumni who've recently earned PhDs and other qualifications from institutions around the world. We are proud of you and would love to hear of your accomplishments! Please send news of your graduation or other professional milestones to [rsea@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:rsea@fas.harvard.edu).*

**Alexis Agliano Sanborn** (AM '13) has a new job as development and communications manager of Christodora, an environmental education nonprofit in NYC. Alexis, who produced the award-winning documentary *Nourishing Japan*, writes in a recent update, "I wanted to do something COMPLETELY different. But, I suppose, not so different for me as I have always loved nature, food, and agriculture. I'm passionate about sustainability and helping to inspire interest in the natural world in the younger generation. I also do want to keep in touch with Japan, but perhaps not in the ways I have traditionally been in the past. This new job is an attempt to pursue things that bring me joy!!"

**Jeonghun Choi** (AM '21) co-authored a recent publication, [The Intellectual World of Yu Kilchun \[Yu Kilchun ū Sasang Segye 유길준의 사상 세계\]](#) (Seoul: Nanam, 2021) [in Korean].

**Inga Kim Diederich** (AM '14) accepted a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of East Asian History at Colby College, after completing her PhD in History at UC San Diego.

**Yi (Allan) Ding** (AM '13) writes "RSEA always has a place in my heart, together with some of my most cherished memories. After I graduated from RSEA in 2013, I spent one year in Arizona and then did a PhD at Stanford. I just graduated last year, and found a tenure-track job in the Department of Religious Studies at DePaul University, Chicago." Congratulations, Yi!

**Yuting Dong** (AM '14) graduated in May 2021 with a PhD from Harvard's Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations.

**Feiran Du** (AM '13) recently received her PhD ('21) from Harvard's Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations. Feiran is working as an editor for Himalaya Media, a podcasting startup.

**Eyck Freymann** (AM '18) is wrapping up his DPhil in China Studies at the University of Oxford. Eyck is a columnist for [The Wire China](#) and author of [One Belt One Road: Chinese Power Meets the World](#) (Harvard Asia Center Press, 2020).

**Daniel Joseph** (AM '16) edited a new book [Terminal Boredom by Izumi Suzuki](#), released April 2021 by Verso. It is the first English-language publication of the work of Izumi Suzuki, a legend of Japanese science fiction and a countercultural icon. Daniel comments, "[Suzuki](#) (1949-1986) was a pretty far-out lady, and one of the first women to breakthrough in the very male world of Japanese science fiction. Even if you don't like science fiction, these are weird, unique, disquieting stories." Daniel translated two of the stories and edited the volume.

**Rachel Leng** (AM '15) wrote about [Living in Japan as a Singapore Diaspora](#) in an October 2020 blog post to **Mabel Chan's** (AM '93) [One in a Billion](#) storytelling and networking platform.

**Josiah Liang** (AM '13) started a new position in March at Boston Consulting Group.

**Kuniko Yamada McVey** (AM '12) has served 32 years as Librarian for the Japanese Collection at Harvard Yenching Library. Congratulations and thank you Kuniko for the expert guidance you continue to give to so many scholars.

**Masaki Naito** (AM '21) moved to Manila to take up his position as Second Secretary at the Japanese Embassy in the Philippines.

**Ryan Neely** (AM' 18) is in the Pentagon working strategy, plans, and policy for the Department of Defense.

**Wenting Qin** (AM '18) is working for NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) General Bureau for China in Beijing as a producer, mostly covering social and cultural issues. Wenting writes, "2020 has been extremely challenging for our reporting in many senses, and we are hoping to work more flexibly in the face of great uncertainty both in China and the international society."



**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](mailto:rsea2@fas.harvard.edu) with news you'd like to share with the RSEA community.