Looking Forward: “Asia and the City”

In 2013-14, our theme will be “Asia and the City.” Asia has seen the earliest examples of urbanization in the world, and yet Asian cities today struggle to maintain their historical identities, while modernizing at a neck-breaking speed, largely following Western models. More than 60 percent of Asian populations today live in cities, and the six largest urban agglomerations in the world (between 35 and 24 million inhabitants each) are all in Asia: Tokyo, Guangzhou, Jakarta, Shanghai, Seoul, and Delhi. The challenges and opportunities of urbanism in Asia are staggering, and yet exciting.

The academic year will be punctuated by presentations by architects and urban planners, documentary screenings, workshops in collaboration with other BU centers, musical and cultural events, and more. Please check our website’s Upcoming Events @ bu.edu/asian/news/calendar/ to follow our “ASIA AND THE CITY” activities, as well as many other events!
The past academic year 2013-14, my first as Director, was another exciting year for BUCSA. This newsletter offers highlights of some of the activities we organized, and shows the vibrancy of our Asian Studies community, its interaction with several BU Schools and Centers, and beyond the university. We chose “Young Asia” as our yearly theme and reflected on the importance of youth for the future of the continent and of the entire world. Faculty, local and international visiting researchers, graduate and undergraduate students, all participated in and promoted, with BUCSA's support, a variety of talks, cultural events, and workshops, engaging a diverse audience on campus and a larger public beyond BU, through some collaborative enterprises (such as the BU-MIT-Harvard graduate student group on Chinese Politics). We also participated in larger initiatives sponsored by the University, such as the International Education Week, promoted by BU Global Programs, and the first BU India Symposium.

During the academic year 2013-14 we will focus our attention on “Asia and the City.” BUCSA will promote a string of activities on the importance of the city and of urban culture in the past, present, and future of Asia. We invite you to join us for our Fall reception (co-sponsored by the student group ASIABU since 2006); several talks and slideshows on urbanism in Asia (including a Taiwan Forum presentation on sustainable urban planning in Taipei); presentations by UC Berkeley South Asia sociologist Raka Ray, University of Chicago literary scholar Leela Gandhi, Indian novelist and editor Chandrahas Choudhury, and celebrated Japanese author Yoko Tawada; a film on the famed Chinese contemporary artist Ai Weiwei; a workshop on urban quality of life and sustainability jointly sponsored by the Pardee Center for the Longer-Range Future at BU; and much more. Please sign up for our Weekly Newsletter to stay updated about our activities, and learn more on our website about who we are and what we do!

Cheers!

Eugenio Menegon
Associate Professor of Chinese History and Director,
BUCSA
Merry White receives Order of the Rising Sun

On April 29th, the Japanese Government announced conferral of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, upon Merry White, Professor of Anthropology at Boston University, in recognition of her significant contributions to the development of Japanese studies and the introduction of Japanese culture in the United States of America.

In order to study the contemporary society and culture of Japan, Professor White visits Japan almost every year. She has recently focused her attention on social space and social changes in urban Japan. Her many books cover the areas of education, internationalization, youth and popular culture, family/social policy and women in Japan. Her most recent publication, *Coffee Life in Japan* has had tremendously positive reviews. In 2012, she received the John E. Thayer Prize from Japan Society Boston.


Wiebke Denecke publishes volume with BUCSA support

Professors Wiebke Denecke (BU, Modern Languages and Comparative Literatures) and Kimiko Kono (Waseda University, Director of the Institute of Japanese Classics, Tokyo) published a conference volume on the changing faces of the concept of “literature” (wen/bun) in East Asia and Japan. Professor Wiebke writes,

“I wanted to thank BUCSA for the very generous support of the conference I co-organized with a Waseda colleague last summer in Tokyo. It was a wonderfully productive event. In response to the success, my colleague Kono Kimiko and I got a contract for a three-volume series on the history and future of the notion of literature/bun in Japan and East Asia. Nowadays the Western concept of literature has overwritten the traditional concept of “Letters” in Japan and we need to invest much effort in historical research to recover that lost world of wen/bun and reflect on what it meant in traditional East Asia and what it can contribute to critical discourse in contemporary literary studies around the globe.”

Rob Weller awarded 2013 Guggenheim Fellowship

BU CASA is delighted to announce that Robert Weller, chair of Anthropology is the recipient of a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship for 2013, for his project on religion and ritual in contemporary China. Guggenheim Fellowships are intended for men and women who have already demonstrated exceptional capacity for productive scholarship or exceptional creative ability in the arts. The Foundation receives between 3,500 and 4,000 applications each year, approximately 200 Fellowships are awarded each year.

For more information see: gf.org/fellows/17515-robert-weller

The Order of the Rising Sun was the first national decoration awarded by the Japanese Government, created on 10 April 1875 by decree of the Council of State during the reign of the Meiji Emperor.

The Order of the Rising Sun
BU CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF ASIA  FALL 2013

Faculty & Visiting Researchers Highlights
Faculty Publications


Emine Fetvaci, Picturing History at the Ottoman Court, University of Washington Press, 2013.


Huang Weijia, with Qun Ao, Where Does the Wind Blow, Cheng & Tsui Company, 2013

Emily Hudson, Disorienting Dharma: Ethics and the Poetics of Suffering in the Mahabharata, Oxford University Press, 2012


Jeremy Menchik (IR; Indonesia)
Professor Menchik’s research focuses on the politics of the Muslim world, especially Indonesia. His dissertation at Wisconsin-Madison examined the variation in religious and political tolerance in Indonesia during the twentieth century and is based on two years of field research including 1000 elite surveys, 150 in-depth interviews, and 12 months of research in the archives of the world’s largest Islamic institutions. Other research interests include law and society, political violence, politics of the Middle East and Southeast Asia, and qualitative and mixed-method research design. He spent last year as a visiting scholar at the American University of Beirut.

Ben Siegel (History; India)
Trained as a historian of South Asia at Harvard, Ben Siegel’s research explores the interactions of food, culture, and politics in India’s nationalist movement and its first several decades of independence. His teaching and research is centered around the following areas: citizenship, governance, and statehood; comparative colonial and global history; development, technology, and the politics of expertise; history of economic thought; food politics, famine, and hunger; and modern South Asian politics, economy, and culture.

Joseph Harris (Sociology; Thailand)
Professor Harris is a 2012 graduate of the University of Wisconsin, with a 2005 Master of Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, and consulting experience across three continents for organizations ranging from the World Bank to UNDP and the Grameen Foundation. His research agenda positions him perfectly to do the kind of comparative political analysis of health care and health policy that will contribute to a distinctive BU approach to comparative political and economic study of health and health care. As a specialist in Thailand and extensive experience elsewhere in Asia, Dr. Harris will also contribute to Asian Studies and to International Relations at BU.

Abhisheka (MLCL; Hindi/Urdu)
Professor Abhisheka joined the department of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature in Fall 2012. He teaches Hindi and Urdu language at BU, as well as occasional courses on South Asian literature and popular culture. He has previously taught all levels of Hindi at the University of Michigan and at the United States Embassy in India. He also served as a visiting assistant professor in literature at Delhi University, India. His areas of interest include history of Hindi-Urdu literature, religion, bhakti poetry, South Asian hagiography, and film culture.

Yang Yoon Sun (MLCL; Korea)
Professor Yang focuses her current research on turn-of-the-20th-century Korean fiction, gender, and colonialism. She is now at work on a book manuscript tentatively titled The Rise of Modern Korean Fiction: From Domestic Women to Sentimental Men, 1906-1917. Selected by the Daesan Foundation as a recipient of the 2011 Grant for Translation, Research, and Publication of Korean Literary Works, this manuscript aims to give a gender-conscious, post-colonial account of the beginnings of modern Korean prose fiction. Professor Yang’s teaching interests include Korean and East Asian literature, culture, and film, gender studies, and literary and cultural theory.

NEW VISITING RESEARCHER
Amod Lele
Amod Lele holds a PhD from Harvard University in the study of religion with a specialization in South Asia, an MS from Cornell University in development sociology and a BA in urban geography. His dissertation examined the ethics of the Indian Buddhist philosopher Santideva, and his master’s thesis was a comparative study of the roles of Hinduism and Confucianism in the politics of India and Singapore. He published an article based on that thesis in Asian Studies Review. He has been a professor of Hindu traditions and religious studies at Colorado College and Stonehill College. He works at Boston University as an educational technologist. His current scholarly research is in cross-cultural philosophy, examining large-scale questions at issue in the comparison of South and East Asian philosophical traditions with each other and with the West.
Event Highlights of 2012-13
Year in Review

Asia Film Week 2012

Lasting October 22-26, 2012, the week kicked off with a Student Symposium on “Young Asia: The Past and the Future,” in collaboration with the Pardee Center. The seminar featured presentations by five BU students on topics including pension system reform in China, the outlook for agriculture and farming for future generations in Taiwan, social media and pop culture in China and Korea, and specific influences of youth on culture and the economy of Indonesia. For the rest of week, there were daily lunch talks, multiple film viewings each day with guest speakers and presenters, music and performances. A celebratory reception closed out the week. For more info, see bit.ly/UNN12x

Conversations with Tarun Tejpal

On October 1, we hosted a lecture by Indian novelist Tarun Tejpal, author of *The Story of My Assassins*. Widely regarded as one of the most influential voices in India, Tejpal heads an independent news agency in India, Tehelka, that has broken new ground for its aggressive public interest journalism. The event, which was moderated by Professor Manjari Miller (IR), was subsequently broadcast on WBUR’s “World of Ideas.”

Taiwan Forum Lecture and a screening of Beijing Bicycle

On November 7, with support from TECO, we hosted our first “Taiwan Forum Lecture” with the Taiwanese filmmaker Peggy Chiao. Chiao, who is a professor at the Taipei National University of the Arts, is engaged in film production, international distribution, and film criticism. In conjunction with Chiao’s visit, on November 9, we hosted a screening of *Beijing Bicycle*. It premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival on 17 February 2001 and won the Jury Grand Prix, but was subsequently banned in Mainland China. Following the screening, Chiao led a question and answer session in which she discussed some of the social issues behind the film, including class, youth delinquency, theft, and rural-urban socio-economic divisions and change.

Inaugural BU-India Symposium

On Friday, May 10, 2013, Boston University hosted its first BU-India Symposium. The goals of this BU Presidential Symposium coordinated by Deepti Nijhawan (BU India Initiatives) were to have a vibrant discussion on the challenges and opportunities of working with and in India, and to highlight the uniqueness of BU’s historic ties and engagement with India. The Indian Ambassador to the United States, Nirupama Rao, was one of the opening guest speakers. BUCSA faculty contributed to the success of the Symposium, with a roster of presenters including Professors Frank Korom, Emily Hudson, and Sunil Sharma, and participation by several other South Asianists in Boston. For more information, see bu.edu/globalprograms/india/
The highlight of the spring was our February symposium on new media, offering a cultural yet technically informed reading of youth internet interactions in a global context. Stepping away from quantitative measurements and an overt focus on youth politicization of the internet, the afternoon explored the on-the-ground “soft” uses: entertainment, celebrities, sociability, and crowdsourced aggregations of data.

Presentations were made by Jenna Burrell (UC Berkeley): “Invisible users: Internet and Youth in Ghana”; Paola Prado (Roger Williams University): “Digital Inclusion among Marginalized Youth in Brazil”; Anshul Jain (Boston University): “Migration and the Evolving Mediascape: New Media, Identity and the Transnational Politics of the Indian Diaspora”; and Jeremy Goldkorn (founder, Danwei.com): “Chinese Youth Culture in the Age of Weibo (Microblog)” and facilitated by Mina Tsay-Vogel (BU, COM). The final roundtable discussion was led by James E. Katz, the Feld Professor of Emerging Media, and the Director of the Division of Emerging Media Studies at Boston University’s College of Communications.
Spotlight on Student Groups: Asian Studies Initiative At Boston University (ASIABU) Highlights

ASIAN FOOD FESTIVAL
On April 6, ASIABU hosted an Asian Food Festival featuring a variety of dishes representing the cuisines of Vietnam, Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Iran, and Kazakhstan. The event was such a success that there are plans to make it an annual event.

MUSEUM VISITS with Professor Menegon
Visiting the Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods: Portugal, Jesuits, and Japan exhibit at the McMullen Museum

The exhibition examines cultural exchanges from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries through the movement of goods on Portuguese ships. Portuguese freighters traveled from Portugal to Japan in a four-year roundtrip that included extended stopovers in India and China. Central to this narrative of trade and cultural exchange are seven magnificent folding screens depicting Japanese encounters with the so-called “nanban-jin” (“southern barbarians”), who were mainly Portuguese sailors and Jesuit missionaries.

Yin Yu Tang House at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem

The Peabody Essex Museum has dismantled a nineteenth-century Chinese merchant's house and rebuilt it in Salem, MA. The museum has created a fascinating exhibit that displays everyday rural Chinese family life from 200 years ago until the present. We took a guided tour of the house discussing its historical and cultural significance with Chinese History Professor Eugenio Menegon.

For more info see: pem.org/sites/yinyutang/

ANNOUNCEMENT: Introducing ASIABU's Board for 2013-2014
President:
Ayako Watanabe

Co-VP:
Yi-an Chen
Naveed Ghani

Co-PR Chair:
Theo Pacun
Sam Huang

Treasurer:
SongHan Nguyen

Secretary:
MeiHua Li

Cultural Ambassadors:
Aizhan Serikkyzy
Yejin Noh
Linyu Song
Spotlight on Selected Graduate Student Research

John Forrestal, MA cand., Musicology and Ethnomusicology

We welcome first-year MA student John Forrestal to the BUCSA community! John’s research deals primarily with the musical repertory of the musical ensemble accompanying muai Thai, a martial art from Thailand. His research deals with the oral transmission, history, and performance practice of the klong khaek ensemble (the bpìi chawaa oboe, klong khaki drums, and ching hand cymbals). He is also interested in the roles that dance, ritual, and religion play into muai Thai, as well as issues such as globalization, nationalism, and the construction of cultural histories. Lastly, he is interested in the transmission of information between Thailand and the United States—in particular, how muai Thai is perceived and translated in the States (or in Thailand), and the pedagogical concerns that such transmissions implicate.

Anshul Jain, PhD cand., Political Science

Anshul’s dissertation, Open Networks and Scattered Peoples, concentrates on the role of new media in the participation of subgroups of the Indian diaspora in the political life of their home country. Other ongoing projects include: “New Media and Civil Society in Iran”—a study of how the evolution of smaller media formats have impacted the contours of civil society, state control and opposition activism in Iran since the 1960s; “Post-Presidential Activism”—an examination of the role of former U.S. Presidents in articulating foreign policy positions and objectives; “Retroactive Rehabilitation”—an inquiry into the incidence of enhanced reputations enjoyed by formerly reviled autocrats in unstable states across conflict-ridden regions of the world; and, “Interdisciplinary Security Coordination”—a study centering on emerging security issues (environmental conditions, climate change, food and water resources and disease epidemiology) and their roles in national security planning.

Chien-Kai Chen, PhD, Political Science

Chien-Kai Chen published in the Journal of Contemporary China: “Comparing Jiang Zemin’s Impatience with Hu Jintao’s Patience Regarding the Taiwan Issue, 1989–2012.” Although the essence of China’s Taiwan policy has not changed from the era of Jiang Zemin to the present, the era of Hu Jintao, Jiang’s and Hu’s attitudes are different. Jiang was impatient with the delay in the unification of China and Taiwan, talking about timetables for unification; however, Hu has so far been patient, saying that he is not afraid of delaying unification. The purpose of this paper is to explain why their attitudes are different. Chen argues that two factors combine to result in Jiang’s impatience and Hu’s patience: conflicting ‘perceptions of Taiwan’s domestic politics and Taiwan’s China policy’ and differing ‘perceptions of the US behavior and attitude regarding Taiwan’.

Winner Announced!

Undergraduate Essay Prize in East Asian Studies 2013

At Commencement in May 2013, BU’s East Asian Studies Interdisciplinary Program granted for the first time three essay prizes for the best undergraduate term papers on East Asia submitted in 2012-13.

Calvin Chiu, a junior majoring in IR and Economics, wrote an essay on “The Development and Efficacy of Chinese Banking Reform” showing a sophisticated understanding of the way banking and financial systems work in China. Calvin was also able to offer a trenchant criticism of the findings of professional researchers at several junctures, in his attempt to explain the dynamics of the 2008 financial crisis and its connection to economic trends since the mid-2000s.

Thea Diklich-Newell, a senior majoring in Comparative Literatures, won for her essay “Murakami and Magic Realism.” Japanese celebrated writer Murakami was directly influenced by the quintessential representative of “magic realism,” Gabriel Garcia-Marquez and his masterpiece One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967). Thea’s linguistic expertise is mainly in Spanish, yet she decided to engage on a comparative topic over a Japanese author, deftly summarizing some key episodes in Murakami’s novels in English translation.

Kristen Lee, a senior pursuing a double major in IR and East Asian Studies, in her essay “Pirate Queens and Dragon Ladies” revealed the similarities and differences between an Irish and a Chinese female pirate in the early modern period, and displayed a sophisticated understanding of how texts and images are manipulated in history, often to efface gender and women from master narratives controlled by men.
On Thursday, July 12, 2012 faculty and leadership of the Center for the Study of Asia and the International Center for East Asian Archaeology and Cultural History and members of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Boston gathered to celebrate the renewal of a remarkable partnership between Boston University and the Taiwan Ministry of Education. Provost Jean Morrison and Cynthia Huang, Director of the Cultural Division of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Boston, took part in the signing ceremony. In her remarks, the Provost thanked Director Huang and her staff for their vision and generous support over the last five years. The new gift allows Boston University to continue to enhance and make more broadly available knowledge of the history, society, language and culture of greater China in general and Taiwan in particular, through the establishment of a “Taiwan Forum Lecture Series.” It also allows for the development of the International Center for East Asian Archaeology and Cultural History’s collections, and finally, through the ARC/Base Project, a comprehensive, multilingual bibliographic database that will provide an invaluable research resource for scholars and students in East and Southeast Asian archaeology, anthropology, history, art history, and related fields.