



Asian Studies Notes

NEWSLETTER OF THE ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO

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亞細亞學研究

Folk Arts and Modern Technology

By Jeremy Savian, Ph.D. student, Anthropology

The town of Inami in Toyama-ken, Japan, is located at the edge of the Japan Alps near the Sea of Japan and is home to a large group of woodcarvers usually working in the 'traditional' form of carving called *ranma*, or transom carving. Like most rural towns in Japan, Inami is struggling with received notions of what is 'traditional' - notions that come from the larger cultural landscape - while at the same time it is trying to come to terms with a changing economic landscape that *is* on a more global scale. Since the late 70's, the town has had competition from outside of Japan, from Taiwan. This new competition has come about primarily through changes in the mechanisms of marketing, specifically the change from a kind of patronly system to that of corporate management of larger companies, seen particularly in the construction of temples. As these corporations have made efforts to increase efficiency, they have also looked for new ways to reduce the cost of services performed by the *shitauxe*, sub-contractors, carvers being one example. One of the ways they have done this was originally to use Taiwanese carvers, and, subsequently, the Taiwanese have come to be middlemen, for they in turn are having carvings made in China. This has put a strain on the carvers of Inami, for they assert that the need to work quickly to reduce their costs has resulted in a reduction in quality. There have been two responses to these changes: one is to become something more of an artist (something most of the carvers in town eschew), and another is to increase efficiency. And so as the economic system around them changes, they are caught in a bind: how to change with the changing world around them, while still retaining the (received?) identity as 'traditional' woodcarvers, an identity that does give them a kind of cultural capital.

A shift in a carver's identity to that of an artist/craftsperson is not something new. Yanagi Soetsu described what he saw as this inevitable transition in the early part of the century, but it is not a change most of the carvers in Inami are in a position to make. Over the past fifteen to twenty years, there has been a decline in orders for carvings, at least in part due to international competition. But concomitant with that has been a change in how people think about the carvings of the town. As Michel DeCerteau has suggested, as the work of the 'past' (or in the case here, 'traditional') is looked at through a modern lens, it takes on the appearance of something miraculous, amazing. "Science will make princesses out of these Cinderellas."(88:67) This is seen in monikers like Living National Treasures. Through these kinds of definitions one can see a change in who is able to define the nature of what that craft is, and is not. Unfortunately, as an industry shifts to art, there isn't space in this new category for all of the carvers, and so alternative strategies are used. Efficiency, of the kind that is creating problems for the carvers, can be embraced. Presently in Inami, there is a change going on in the system of relationships between carvers and 'support' industries, things like box making and rough wood cutting. There are also changes taking place within the technology of the workshop as well.

In both responses to the economic changes going on, there is the possibility of a change in the identity of the carvers. On the one hand, it might be possible to move into the rarified air of art/craft, but in doing so one would be 'playing by the rules' that are received from the outside, defining oneself within the terms that intellectuals create for a definition of what is 'proper', 'traditional' carving. In this case, the ability for creative change is all but foreclosed in that only traditional forms will be acceptable, as the carvers are looked at through the modern intellectual lens. On the other hand, by participating in efforts to increase efficiency (rationalizing the process?), it might be possible for carvers to shift their identity to a place that does not allow them to participate in the larger cultural landscape as 'Cinderellas'. As in any industry, the rationalization to manufacture would sacrifice the mystical qualities that it now has.

On November 10, at *Asia at Noon*, I will be discussing the tactics of two woodcarvers in Inami that I apprenticed with: Sawa-san is a young carver making his name predominantly through the *shitauxe* system of large corporate temple construction companies. The other carver is Shyuso-san, who is a third generation carver who seems to be steering a course toward an artist/craftsperson notion of carving.

Asia at Noon. Nov. 10, Fri., 12:00. **Jeremy Savian**, Ph.D. student in Anthropology. *Folk Arts and Modern Technology*. Park 280.

NYCAS 2000 a Success

The annual meeting of the New York Conference on Asian Studies was held at the College of St. Rose in Albany. Professor Shahid Refai of St. Rose was the Meeting Chair, and Theodore P. Wright, Jr. chaired the Program Committee.

Around a hundred Asian scholars and graduate students from across New York and neighboring states listened to presentations in two dozen panels. There were special programs on Indian dance, Japanese culture, and a roundtable of ambassadors representing South Asian nations. Professor Peter Duus, modern Japanese historian at Stanford University and president-elect of the Association for Asian Studies, delivered the keynote address.

The NYCAS Board held its annual meeting. UB was represented there by Asian Studies Director Thomas Burkman. The Board established the Marleigh Grayer Ryan Prize for excellent student papers (see separate article on the Prize). Professor John Chaffee, China historian at Binghamton University, was elected President-Elect. His three-year term as President will begin in 2001. NYCAS has strong leadership and its finances are in good order. The NYCAS webpage is <http://www.newpaltz.edu/asianstudies/oh.html>.

The next annual meeting of NYCAS will be held at Cornell University, October 25-27, 2001. Begin now to think about proposing a paper or a panel, so that UB can be well represented. UB will host the meeting in fall 2003.

Faculty News

Interview with Prof. Gao, Art History

Minglu Gao was hired this fall for the position of Assistant Professor in UB's Art History Department. Professor Gao received his Ph.D. in Art History from Harvard (2000). He has a M.A. in Art History (Harvard, 1994), a M.A. in Chinese Art History (Chinese Academy of Arts, 1984), and a B.A. in Art History (Tianjin Academy of Art, 1981). Before coming to Buffalo, Gao was Professor of Art History at Savannah College of Art, Georgia.

Around the age of 16, during the Cultural Revolution, Gao was assigned by the Chinese government to work as a herder ("a cowboy," says Gao) in Mongolia. After herding in a remote, quiet area of Mongolia for five years, Gao went to college in Beijing. Since completing a M.A. in Beijing, Gao has been an editor, a teacher, an art critic, a curator, and organizer of art movements.

Though he did his thesis at Beijing on 12th and 13th century Chinese art, Gao later shifted his interests to Avant-Garde (1989) and became involved in the modern/contemporary movement. At around this time he decided to learn more about Western art. He spent a year in the U.S. as a visiting scholar (Ohio State), then decided to transfer from Beijing to Harvard - "Being a visiting scholar was too comfortable. I needed to be learning something."

As a new faculty member of UB's Art History Department, Gao hopes to spawn interest in modern Asian art within the UB community. He will be teaching two courses in Spring 2001: *Chinese Modernity and Avant-Garde* and *Contemporary Chinese Arts*. He is currently trying to organize an exhibition of modern Asian art in the CFA gallery. Gao would like to

strengthen the emphasis placed on modern Asian art at UB by making ties with universities, museums, and artists in Asia, by inviting lecturers, artists, and scholars of modern Asian art, and by appropriately fortifying the Art History teaching staff and library.

Prof. Gao is presently curator for the traveling exhibits *Point of Origin: Global Conceptualism 1950s-1980s* (now at MIT) and *Insideout: New Chinese Art* (currently in Hong Kong). Gao has published, co-authored, and co-edited books and several articles in both Chinese and English.

Gao lives with his wife Jing SUN and son Roy and finds the people of Buffalo to be friendly. He has yet to sample in full the Buffalo art scene, but notices, from what he has seen so far, that Asian art is rarely encountered.

Visiting Scholars

Okuma, Political Science

Professor Hiroshi Okuma, an international relations specialist from Seijo University in Tokyo, is a visiting scholar hosted by the Political Science Department. He taught PSC 342: *Politics of Developing Nations* this fall and will do research on United States development co-orporation policy in the spring. Prof. Okuma lives in Amherst with his son Yu and will stay in Buffalo until the end of March.

Cho, Philosophy

Professor Sung-Eul Cho, an intellectual historian from Ajou University in Seoul, is a visiting scholar hosted by the Department of Philosophy. He will teach PHI 454: *Chinese Philosophy* in the spring.

News for Students

New Singapore Exchange Program

The University at Buffalo has recently signed a new exchange agreement with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore. Formerly a School of Management program, this exchange is now open to any UB student regardless of major. UB students may study in any of the following departments at NTU:

- Accountancy & Business
- Arts
- Communication Studies
- Education
- Civil & Structural Engineering
- Computer Engineering
- Electrical & Electronic Engineering
- Mechanical & Production Engineering
- Materials Engineering
- Science

Students may participate in the exchange for one semester or the full academic year. All courses are taught in English. For applications and more information, please contact: Study Abroad Programs, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus; 645-3912; studyabroad@buffalo.edu, or view our website at: www.buffalo.edu/studyabroad

Undergraduate Scholarship

The National Security Education Program (NSEP) was designed to provide American undergraduates with the resources and encouragement they need to acquire skills and

experience in countries and areas of the world critical to the future security of our nation. The amount of an NSEP scholarship award is based on financial need, as certified by your institution's financial aid office. The amount will vary from the cost of participation in a proposed study abroad program, to partial support. The maximum scholarship award for any one academic term in a study abroad program will be about \$8,000 or \$16,000 for an academic year. The minimum award will be \$2,500 for summer, \$4,000 for one semester or \$6,000 for an academic year. The 2001–2002 NSEP academic year covers study abroad during summer 2001, fall 2001, and/or spring 2002. Freshmen and sophomores are eligible to apply for scholarships for summer, semester, and full-year programs. Juniors and seniors are eligible to apply for semester and full-year programs. For applications and more information, please contact: Study Abroad Programs, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus; 645-3912; studyabroad@buffalo.edu

Marleigh Grayer Ryan Student Prize

The New York Conference on Asian Studies (NYCAS) announces the initiation of prizes for excellent student papers in any Asian studies field. The prize honors the outstanding service of Dr. Marleigh Grayer Ryan, longtime Executive Secretary of NYCAS.

Each year, one prize of \$100 will be awarded to an undergraduate student and one to a graduate student. Students must be enrolled in a college or university in New York State. NYCAS will financially assist awardees in attending the fall meeting of NYCAS, where the awards will be formally presented. The upcoming conference will be held at Cornell University, October 25-27, 2001.

The Asian Studies program at UB will be receiving the essays. A committee of UB Asianist faculty will evaluate them and select the winners.

Papers should be submitted in hard copy and on disk or e-mail attachment to Ryan Prize Committee, Asian Studies Program, 715 Clemens Hall. This year's deadline is June 1, 2001. For full particulars, contact Thomas W. Burkman, Director of Asian Studies, at burkman@buffalo.edu.

UB Student on Exchange in Kobe, Japan

Justin Tedaldi, senior and joint major in English and Japanese Studies, is currently on exchange at Konan University in Kobe, Japan. Following are some more of Mr. Tedaldi's observations on Japan:

"I really like the mass transit system. You get your ticket ahead of time, but you don't get it punched on the train. You put it in this machine ahead of time, and it automatically punches it for you, and you go through the gate. Then you ride your train to the correct stop, put it in the machine again, and it takes the ticket and shreds it at some unseen location when you leave.

"Young people wear lots of blue jeans, sneakers and t-shirts, but the shirts always have English on them. Most of the time it never makes any sense, but to tell you the truth the only people I see wearing clothes with Japanese writing on it are the other foreigners!

"Everybody has cell phones. Period. They love sending e-mails on them, tapping away at the tiny things while waiting for their trains.

"And there's a big obsession with 'cute' here. Signs, instructions, advertisements...they're all 'kawaii' in an attempt to get their message across. One new product here is a talking refrigerator. The tag line for the commercial is 'there's a cake inside!', which I suppose must speak volumes for all the people over here who always wondered what that solitary swinging door sounded like. Let's hope they don't extend this technology to the porcelain throne.

"Sunday I walked all over Osaka for the entire day. I found all kinds of stores and shopping centers that really surprised me because I had never seen anything like it. I went to a Warner Brothers store and people were wearing Bugs Bunny and Tweety Bird suits. I tried to shake Tweety's hand, but he didn't know how to respond. In any case, I was totally impressed with the look and professionalism of the big-time commercial districts."

Journals

Hitting Critical Mass

A Journal of Asian American Cultural Criticism

Hitting Critical Mass welcomes articles on all aspects of Asian American cultural criticism. We are especially interested in critical writings on music, visual art, electronic media, and popular culture. Articles should follow the *MLA Style Manual* and should not exceed 7,500 words. Since submissions are reviewed anonymously, please remove identifying information from the main text. In addition, please include: a cover letter containing your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, institutional affiliation and standing (undergraduate, graduate student, faculty, independent scholar), paper title, and acknowledgements; a brief biography not to exceed 100 words; and an abstract not to exceed 350 words.

Articles must be submitted in electronic form, preferably as Microsoft Word documents (Windows or Macintosh). Either e-mail a file attachment or snail-mail a 3.5-inch disk to:
E-Mail: critmass@socrates.berkeley.edu
Snail-Mail: Hitting Critical Mass, Asian American Studies Program, Department of Ethnic Studies, 506 Barrows #2570, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-2570
Deadline: January 16, 2001

Opportunities and Events

Religion and Human Rights Conference

The conference *Religion and Human Rights: Ideology, The Rhetoric of Hate, and The Languages of Reconciliation* will take place at Cornell University from November 8 to 11, 2000.

The Opening Address, "Linking Religion and Human Rights: Implications and Challenges" will be presented by Jane Marie Law, H. Stanley Krusen Professor of World Religions, Director, Religious Studies Program; Associate Professor, Japanese Religions, Asian Studies, Cornell

Panels include:

- "Responses to Japanese Anti-semitism: How Effective Have They Been?" Presenter: Dr. David G. Goodman, Professor, East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Illinois

- "Buddhism, Human Rights, and the Trafficking of Women" Presenter: Dr. Lucinda Joy Peach, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy & Religion, American University
- "Religious Rights Behind Prison Bars: Buddhist and Native Hawaiian Experience in Repression and Reconciliation" Presenters: Rev. J. Anthony Stultz, Penn State University Virginia Cohn Parkum, Ph.D.

Links to registration forms and a complete conference schedule may be found on our website under November Events. <http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/eastasia/events.html>

CIEE Seminars

The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) will offer the following International Faculty Development Seminars for (IFDS) 2001:

Australia and the Asia-Pacific Rim into the 21st Century University of Wollongong, Australia (Seminar fee: \$1995)

This seminar is designed to introduce participants to the cultural, social, economic, and political issues shaping Australia and the Asia-Pacific region today. June 10-19.

The Historic Cities of China

Peking University, Northwest University, East China Normal University (Seminar fee: \$1995)

This seminar offers participants an opportunity to explore Chinese culture and society through visits to the historical cities of China. June 5-15.

Taiwan: History's First Chinese Democracy

National Chengchi University (Seminar fee: \$1995)

This seminar introduces modern Taiwan history, focusing on economic development, political democratization, and a society that combines traditional Chinese values with Western openness. June 18-27.

Tradition and Transformation in Vietnam

The Vietnam-USA Society (Seminar fee: \$1850)

This seminar provides an opportunity to understand Vietnam

today by examining its culture and history within the context of the ongoing political and economic reforms shaping Vietnam's destiny. July 7-17.

For further information, refer to the IFDS website located at: <http://www.ciee.org/ifds>

ExxonMobil Faculty Fellowship Grants

CIEE has received a grant from the ExxonMobil Foundation that will provide funding for selected participants on the 2001 IFDS seminars (see above article). If you are a faculty member or administrator at a NAFEO-member institution (HBCU), you are eligible to apply for a fellowship. For further information on the 2001 ExxonMobil Faculty Fellowship Grants, go to: www.ciee.org/ifds/funding/exxonmobil.htm Application deadline for the ExxonMobil Faculty Fellowship grants is February 1, 2001.

ESD Internships on International Trade

Empire State Development (ESD) was recently awarded a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to solve international trade problems for small to medium sized businesses in the ARC area. Graduate student interns and faculty members from selected local colleges and Universities will provide much of the work products. This is a very cost effective method of assisting companies grow and will qualify them for other ESD programs. For details contact Thomas Burkman, Asian Studies program, SUNY Buffalo; Tel: (716) 645-3474 email: burkman@buffalo.edu

UB's Greek InvASIAN

by Nicole, a sister of Kappa Phi Lamda, student in the English Department

The Greek system (fraternities/sororities) within UB has been in existence for over 100 years. However, through that extensive time period, it has only been within the past seven years that Asian Greeks have come about. Despite the fact that Asian Greeks are considered the "babies" on this campus, they have multiplied to six various organizations on this campus.

Although every individual organization may exist for its own specific purposes (each Greek letter stands for something), they have all evolved from the common desire to promote Asian American awareness (without being exclusive to Asian Americans) on our campus. Once you become a member of an organization, you have not just joined the organization but a system of organizations, allowing networking amongst a tighter community with common goals.

However, these organizations are not exclusive to other Greek organizations. Due to the fact that Asian Greeks exist to promote Asian awareness, unity, leadership, and academic scholarship, they interact as much as possible not only with each other, but with the entire Buffalo community. All organizations participate in several community service events, as well as philanthropic events, in order to better serve our community, while attaining leadership qualities amongst its participants.

Being Greek is not all about business, it is also a good opportunity for social growth; these are, after all, the best years of your life right? Slowly but surely members get to know everyone within system. But the relationship members retain with their brothers/sisters stretches truly beyond friendship. The fact that members refer to one another as "brother" or "sister" exemplifies how close they really are.

SORORITIES

- ΚΦΛ** (Kappa Phi Lambda)
Pan-Asian sorority est. 2/97
www.angelfire.com/ny/kappaphilambda
- αΚΔΦ** (alpha Kappa Delta Phi)
Asian American interest sorority est. 3/97
<http://ubkdpfi.homestead.com>
- ΣΨΖ** (Sigma Psi Zeta)
Multicultural, Asian interest sorority est. 10/98
www.geocities.com/buffalosigmas

FRATERNITIES

- ΛΦΕ** (Lambda Phi Epsilon)
National Asian interest fraternity, est. '94
www.buffalolambdas.cjb.net
- ΠΔΨ** (Pi Delta Psi)
Asian cultural interest fraternity, est. '94
www.stormloader.com/pdpsi/ie/htm
- Nu Alpha Phi** (*Interest Group*)
Asian oriented fraternity interest group
contact: yongxie@acsu.buffalo.edu

*Note: The *Lambda Legacies* are a subdivision, or "Little Sister" program of Lambda Phi Epsilon. Although not a sorority, it provides for an introduction into the Greek System.

The Asian Studies Program presents for Spring 2001 Asian American Studies Courses

Survey of Asian American History

Reg. # 064562 HIS 190 3 hrs. MWF 10:00-10:50 Baldy 110 Bela Thacker
Reg. # 344787 AS 190

This course introduces major themes in Asian American studies from the beginning of Asian immigration in the mid-nineteenth century to the present. We will examine why Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, South Asians, and Vietnamese) came to the U.S. and what happened to them in relation to issues of immigration, ethnic identity, community, gender, and family relations. Students will be required to read secondary historical literature and interpret examples of primary sources ("voices" of Asian Americans presented in the assigned readings). In addition to the weekly assigned readings, students will be required to read these texts: Sucheng Chan's *Asian Americans: an Interpretive History* and Gary Okihiro's *Margin and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*. Student evaluation will be based on class participation (10%), two exams (30% each) and a final research paper (30%).

Asian American Women Writers and Poets

Reg. # 396950 AS 270 3 hrs. T R 9:30-10:50 Clemens 119 Xiaojing Zhou
Reg. # 055403 AMS 270
Reg. # 288766 ENG 269X
Reg. # 159351 WS 270XAS

This course examines a range of Asian American women's writings and their social, cultural, and historical contexts which shape their thematic concerns, narrative strategies, and distinctive styles. Materials to be discussed include novels, memoirs, essays, poems, and short stories. Through Asian American women's prose and poetry, we seek to understand the relations between identities of gender, race, and sexuality and the formation of American women's literary traditions. At the same time, we will explore the generative and enabling conditions for Asian American women's innovative and subversive writings in connection to various feminist theoretical perspectives.

The Asian American Experience

Reg. # 115724 AS 110 3 hrs. R 13:30-16:10 Clemens 107 Xiaojing Zhou
Reg. # 111888 AMS 102

This course examines the Asian Pacific American experience from the beginning of Asians' and Pacific Islanders' entry into North America in the mid-eighteenth century to the present. We will investigate the Asian Pacific American experience in a global context of colonialism, imperialism, and changing economic structures, as well as national and international power relations. We will also consider the formation of national and racial identities in the United States and their impact on Asian Pacific American communities and individuals. While aiming to develop a historically and culturally specific and theoretically informed view of the Asian Pacific American experience in national and transnational contexts, this course adopts an interdisciplinary approach to its various topics. Therefore, course materials include texts in history, sociology, and literature, plus visual materials of cultural productions.

For more information, contact Asian Studies 645-3474; burkman@buffalo.edu or Prof. Zhou at zxj@acsu.buffalo.edu

IN MEMORIUM

Edwin L. Neville, Jr.,
Professor of History (Japan and East Asia)
Canisius College
October 1, 2000

Asian Studies Calendar

- Nov. 5, Sun., 6:00. **2000 International Feast: India** for international students. Tandoori's Palm, 7740 Transit Rd. For information contact Meena Rustgi (632-5768) or Norma Rubin (688-7062)
- Nov. 10, Fri., 12:00. Asia at Noon. **Jeremy Savian**, Ph.D. student in Anthropology. *Folk Arts and Modern Technology*. Stacey Johnson, from Anthropology, will convene. Park 280.
- Nov. 10, Fri., 4:00. A student performed staged reading of Elizabeth Wong's **Kimchee and Chitlins** will take place at SUNY Geneseo. For information contact Randy Kaplan: kaplanr@geneseo.edu
- Nov. 17, Fri., 12:00. Asia at Noon. **Sinyen Ling**, *Racial Stereotyping and the Wen Ho Lee Case*. Park 280.
- Nov. 17, Fri., 7:00-9:30. Symposium screening. *Wen Ho Lee: An Examination of Race and National Security*. Clemens 120.
- Dec. 1, Fri., 12:00. Asia at Noon. **Herbert Batt**, China literary scholar. *Ben Franklin Comes to Beijing: Rags to Riches in Contemporary Chinese Literature*. Constantine Tung, from MLL, will convene. Park 280.

Asian Studies Program, University at Buffalo

Campus

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