SEAS welcomes new Head of Department

The arrival of a new Head of Department is one of many changes taking place in the School of East Asian Studies.

The School of East Asian Studies was proud to welcome Professor Xiaowei Zang as the new Head of Department and Chair in Chinese Studies at the beginning of September 2008.

Professor Zang comes to Sheffield with experience of having worked at universities in Singapore, Australia and Hong Kong. He is a sociologist by training and was educated in China and the US, receiving MA and PhD degrees from the University of California, Berkeley. His research interests lie in the fields of ethnicity, gender, social stratification and networks and have resulted in a number of published books including Children of the Cultural Revolution, Elite Dualism and Leadership Selection in China and Ethnicity and Urban Life in China. He also sits on the editorial boards of several international journals, such as Sociological Focus and Asian Ethnicity.

Professor Zang has undertaken extensive fieldwork in China over the past ten years and is currently conducting research projects on ethnicity and urban life in northwestern China, and inequality among members of ethnic minorities in China. He is now in the process of completing a book manuscript on Islam, family processes and gender inequality among Uyghur Muslims in the autonomous region of Xinjiang in northwestern China. Professor Zang is delighted to be joining the school at a time of considerable change and both the School and the University wish him every success as he takes up his new post.

Professor Zang succeeds Professor Tim Wright, who was Head of Department from 2000 and oversaw the School becoming one of the UK’s leading departments in East Asian Studies, particularly with the establishment of the White Rose East Asia Centre in 2006.

Professor Wright will remain in SEAS for the time being. He is currently on a year-long period of study leave during which he is working on two long-standing projects. On the one hand, he is writing a book on the political economy of the Chinese coal-mining industry; and on the other hand, he is also working on a study of economic fluctuations in China during the 1920s and 1930s that focuses both on China’s relationship with the world economy, particularly during the World Depression of the 1930s, and on the impact of natural disasters.

In addition, as the newly elected President of the British Association for Chinese Studies, Professor Wright will continue to promote Chinese Studies across Sheffield and throughout the UK.

Staff and students in SEAS would like to thank him for all his hard work and encouragement during these past eight years.
Graduation day

The School of East Asian Studies was proud to see almost fifty of its undergraduate students graduate at a ceremony held on 22 July 2008.

In Chinese Studies, Jodie Gardiner was awarded both a first-class degree and the Robert Sloss Prize for achievement, whilst in Japanese Studies, Jon Perry was awarded the Margaret Daniels Prize for his first-class performance.

Professor Tim Wright, who attended his last graduation day as Head of Department, commented that “we again have two outstanding prize winners, with achievements both in and outside the academic field. Jon has excellent results in language and non-language units, and has extended his ability from Japanese to Chinese and Korean. He also played a leading role in the fund-raising Oxfam Trailwalker hike in Japan. Jodie won the Sir Basil Blackwell Prize for the best performance by a first-year student in the whole faculty, and then went on to broaden her interests from Chinese to Arabic, enabling her to write an excellent dissertation on Islam in China. She has also played a prominent role in the Confucius Institute, giving confident speeches in both English and Chinese at the Chinese Lantern Festival Show in February.”

Since graduation, Jodie has continued to use her Chinese as an information analyst at Futuresource, a consulting company, and Jon is currently working as a coordinator for international relations in Takaoka City, Japan as part of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme.

At the same ceremony, Raymond Yeap was awarded a PhD degree for a thesis on the political thought of Chinese Communist leader, Liu Shaoqi.

SEAS wishes all its graduates every success in their chosen careers.

Congratulations

Florian Schneider, a PhD candidate in the School of East Asian Studies, has just been appointed to the position of Lecturer in Chinese Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Florian is currently revising his PhD thesis, entitled Visual Political Communication in Popular Chinese Television Series, and aims to publish it with Brill Publishers in the near future.

Note on names

Following East Asian convention, the family name precedes the given name/s in Chinese, Japanese and Korean names, unless the particular person uses the Western name order (given name followed by family name) in his/her publications and/or everyday life.

Editor’s note

The views expressed in the articles are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the School and the University.

Certain images used in this newsletter are scaled-down, low-resolution images used to illustrate films or books, or to provide critical analysis of the content or artwork of the image. It is believed that these images qualify as fair use under copyright law.
Little did John Gorick (BA in Japanese Studies, 1991) expect, but his Korean language skills recently landed him a job on the BBC’s drama series Holby City.

It was not what I had in mind eighteen years ago. As I studied away in the Arts Tower, I thought I might become a prominent international businessman or expert on East Asia. Struggling with the Korean writing system, I never thought that those Korean language exercises would put me on the TV in a popular BBC hospital drama nearly two decades later.

There were just four of us studying Korean in those days as part of our degrees in Japanese Studies. I remember visiting Yonsei University on a summer study course and I even backpacked my way to Ullung-do, a glorious volcanic island in the middle of the Japan Sea. But that was really my last connection with Korea – until this year.

I became a professional actor ten years ago and it has been predictably tough. However, when my agent called me and said that the producers of Holby City were looking for a “Korean interpreter”, I thought I was in with a chance. After all, I am probably the only Caucasian actor in the UK who has any knowledge of the Korean language.

Although my Korean was a bit rusty, I could still remember the sound and rhythm of the language and could still read it. My Korean co-star, Seok-Ha Hwang, helped me out greatly but it was quite daunting having to learn big chunks of Korean dialogue about an operation to divide asylum-seeking conjoined baby twins! To be frank, the story was somewhat implausible and once or twice my dialogue was mis-edited but overall I was pleased with the result; especially as I earned more from this job than in the previous nine years!

New book by SEAS alumni

Beyond the Blossoming Fields
By Junichi Watanabe and translated by Anna Isozaki and Deborah Iwabuchi
Alma Books, 2008

Beyond the Blossoming Fields by Junichi Watanabe tells the real-life story of Ogino Ginko (1851-1913), Japan’s first female doctor, and the various challenges she faced. When originally published in Japan, it was hugely popular and sold over three million copies. It is now available in English, having been translated by Anna Isozaki and Deborah Iwabuchi.

Anna was awarded her MA in Advanced Japanese Studies by Distance Learning from the University of Sheffield in 2004. This is her second major translation project, the first being a translation of Miyabe Miyuki’s novel Crossfire, published by Kōdansha International and featured in Number 12 of EastAsia@Sheffield.
Welcome to Sheffield

The School of East Asian Studies is delighted to announce the appointment of two new members of staff in Chinese Studies.

Dr Lucy Xia Zhao has joined the School as a Lecturer in Chinese Studies with many years of experience in teaching languages and cultural studies at university level. She has an MPhil degree in Linguistics and Bilingual First Language Acquisition and a PhD in Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition from the University of Cambridge. She also has degrees from East China University of Science and Technology and Qingdao University in China.

Lucy’s research interests are in language acquisition, comparative syntax and intercultural communication. She is currently working on articles that explore the syntax and interpretation of overt and covert arguments in Chinese and their acquisition by second language learners.

In SEAS, she is teaching across a range of Chinese language modules at various levels.

Dr Meng Ji has been appointed as a Teaching and Research Fellow. Meng has a BA degree from Beijing Foreign Studies University, an MA from University College London and a PhD in Corpus/Computational Linguistics from Imperial College London.

Her research aims to develop an interdisciplinary framework for comparative literature and empirical literary studies and to this end she has already published a number of articles in leading academic journals.

She is currently teaching Chinese vocabulary, unseen translation and interpreting.

New Confucius Institute staff

The University of Sheffield’s Confucius Institute, officially opened in January 2007, was delighted to welcome two new deputy directors, Professor Liang Yanmin of Beijing Language and Culture University and Professor Wang Tianxing of Nanjing University.

Although only just arrived, they have thrown themselves into the work of the Institute and are currently planning an exhibition of photographs from the Beijing Olympics, a series of talks about contemporary China and a series of workshops designed to introduce local business people to the Chinese language and also to Chinese business practices and conventions.

Professors Liang and Wang replace the outgoing deputy directors, Professor Zhang Hailin of Nanjing University and Mrs Hai Cong of Beijing Language and Culture University, who played an invaluable role in getting the Institute off the ground.

From left to right: Caterina Weber of the Confucius Institute, Professor Wang Tianxing, Consul Zhang Yihua of the Chinese Consulate in Manchester and Professor Liang Yanmin.
Japan’s shrinking regions

Dr Peter Matanle, Lecturer in Japanese Studies, is heading a project on depopulation and decline in Japan’s regions that resulted in an international workshop this summer.

Japan’s miraculous economic expansion is often presented as the first example of a successfully developed non-Western society and an example to follow for other countries in Asia and beyond wishing to escape poverty and deprivation. However, little is said of the effects that this expansion has had on Japan’s regions, and the almost continuous vicious cycle of depopulation and decline that has occurred there since the start of Japan’s modern industrialization.

In recent times, this cycle appears to be accelerating as the national population begins to decline and economic and political activities become further concentrated around Tokyo and the Pacific seaboard of Japan. Some of the difficulties that regional communities are facing as they seek to sustain themselves include breakdowns in familial and community relations; reductions in local tax revenues and redistributed income from metropolitan regions; obsolete public infrastructure and reduced investment in the regional economy and society; the casualization of employment; reductions in visitor numbers; abandonment of residential and business properties as part of a general decline in the quality of the built environment; and severe damage to the natural environment.

However, population shrinkage is at the centre of this complex set of inter-relationships. The national population decline, which began in 2005, along with the continued agglomeration of economic and political activities in the capital region, will accelerate regional depopulation and it is inevitable that some communities will collapse altogether. As depopulation spreads to provincial cities and larger urban areas, the Japanese government predicts that by 2020 the only areas of Japan that will not be registering population shrinkage will be the cities of Tokyo and Yokohama, and the main island of Okinawa.

Starting with a workshop held in Sheffield in July 2008, this project, entitled Japan’s Shrinking Regions, explores the issue of regional depopulation and its accompanying socio-economic outcomes with a view to publishing a book and a special issue of an academic journal. The workshop was held at the Yorkshire Art Space in central Sheffield, itself a structure that was built in part as a response to the industrial decline of Sheffield and as part of Sheffield’s revitalization.

Eighteen scholars from the UK, Germany, Japan and the US gathered to present papers and to exchange their differing perspectives. In addition, the Berlin-based “Shrinking Cities Project” put on an exhibition of their research, which included statistics, photographs and maps from the cities of Detroit, Hakodate, Liverpool and elsewhere. On the last day of the workshop, representatives of local authorities gave valuable insights from the perspective of the practitioner. These included Andrew Skelton of Sheffield City Council, Nawaz Khan of Derbyshire County Council, and Shunsuke Mutai, Director of the Japan Local Government Centre in London.

Regional depopulation and ageing are shaping up to be amongst the most serious problems the Japanese government will face in the coming decades. By disseminating its findings, this project aims to assist in the development of policies and strategies for mitigating the effects of community decline and collapse on local residents and their descendents.

A poignant image from a dying community: an elderly lady steers her cart past a memorial to dead children and miscarried or aborted fetuses.
The annual China in Photographs competition, which is now in its third year, once again received a large number of excellent submissions. Congratulations to everybody involved but in particular Rob Neal, a student in the Advanced Mandarin Chinese language evening class at the Confucius Institute who also teaches modern languages at Silverdale School in Sheffield. Rob’s photograph (featured above), entitled Miao Couple and depicting an elderly couple of the Miao ethnic minority, won both the “Chinese People” category and “Best in Show”.

This is the first year that the competition has been open to members of the general public and winners in other categories included (from top left to right) Stefan Innerhofer’s photograph entitled Friendship in the “Famous Sites” category, Adrian Freeman’s Bagou Packhorse Trail in the “Everyday Life” category, Colin McCulloch’s ‘A Monkey Gazing Out over the Sea’, Huangshan in the “Chinese Landscapes” category, David Grieve’s Morning Exercise in the “Artistic Images” category, and Amanda Pateman’s Backstage at the Opera, No. 4 in the “Customs and Culture” category.
Congratulations to Miryam Prasetyo (right), currently a second-year student in Management and Japanese Studies, who has been awarded an Ede and Ravenscroft Prize for the best overall performances in the Faculty of Social Sciences in her first-year examinations.

These prizes were established through the generosity of Ede and Ravenscroft Ltd., robe makers to the University of Sheffield, to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the company in 1989. Two prizes are awarded annually in each faculty of the University on a rotational basis and this year was the turn of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Miryam was delighted to be recognized in this way and was very grateful to receive her prize of £500.

Guests were welcomed by the current British Ambassador to Japan, Mr David Warren, and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for External Affairs Professor Dominic Shellard.

Professor Shellard said that he was particularly pleased to be launching this first alumni event in Japan, as the University currently works with twenty-two partner institutions in Japan.

“I am delighted that our first alumni event in Japan has been such an overwhelming success,” said Professor Shellard. “We are extremely grateful to His Excellency the Ambassador for so generously opening his home to the University. We hope that this event will be one of the first of many to bring together the University’s alumni and friends who live and work in Japan.”

Dr Mika Ko, Lecturer in Japanese Studies in the School of East Asian Studies and currently on a research fellowship in Tokyo, spoke about recent news and developments at SEAS including the opening of the new White Rose East Asia Centre in 2006, the record number of students registered in the Japanese Studies programme this year, and the forthcoming opening of the University of Sheffield Dōshisha Centre at Dōshisha University in Kyoto.

Finally, guests heard from Ben Ahmady, a Sheffield student currently on his year abroad in Japan, about what the Sheffield student experience is like today.

The British Council has very kindly agreed to host a University of Sheffield alumni reception in Tokyo on 3 July 2009. All Sheffield graduates living in Japan are welcome to attend and to ensure you receive an invitation please update your contact details at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/alumni/keepintouch

Sheffield alumni gather in Tokyo

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Faculty prize for outstanding performance

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A Year in

An integral part of all language degree programmes in Chinese, Japanese and Korean is the year at one of Sheffield’s partner institutions in East Asia. Three final-year students from each institution share their most memorable experiences.

China

The University of Sheffield maintains a strong and active relationship with the University of Nanjing – one of the top universities in China. SEAS has been sending its students to Nanjing University for almost ten years now and this year there are currently fifteen Chinese Studies students undertaking their year abroad in Nanjing, all of them recipients of scholarships from China’s Ministry of Education.

Noises, smells and a crush of people greeted me as I stepped off the train at Shanghai’s Central Station. My classmate Holly and I had been lucky enough to be met on the high-speed railway line from the airport by one of our friends who was living in Shanghai. But this merely meant that our introduction to China and all its confusion had only been postponed.

Left at the train station by ourselves and clutching our tickets to Nanjing, we tried to make sense of the chaos and find the right train. The Chinese signs were unintelligible. I was suddenly completely unable to access the year of Chinese language in my mind that I had completed before arriving. The English signs were not much help either. Panicking that we might miss our train, Holly and I clamped onto the first businessman we could see who, oddly enough, spoke no English but fluent German instead. He seemed used to the habits of foreigners experiencing their first taste of China, and very kindly took us under his wing. He turned out to be on the same train as us, led us to the right platform, took us to our seats and even offered to arrange a taxi at the other end.

This first experience in China was indicative of what was to come. China is never clear, simple or straightforward, but eventually you always find your way. So, in the end, we made it to Nanjing, our businessman friend arranged a taxi that only overcharged us by five yuan instead of the fifty yuan the cabby was no doubt angling for, and soon we were safely ensconced in our new dormitory at Nanjing University looking forward with anticipation and excitement to the year ahead.

Annika Corbijn Van Willenswaard (BA in Chinese Studies and Management).

Korea

SEAS students receive intensive tuition in the Korean language at the Korean Language Institute (KLI) of Yonsei University in Seoul. Yonsei is one of the top three universities in South Korea and the KLI has the oldest and most established programme of Korean language education. Over the course of the year abroad, students achieve a high level of proficiency in the spoken and written language, whilst also completing an ethnographic project on an aspect of Korean culture.

Being in Korea for a year has undoubtedly been the highlight of my degree so far. As I had not visited Asia before there was a certain amount of culture shock involved, such as asking questions like “what is this that I am eating?” (answer: spam fritters) and “why is this old lady shouting at me?” (answer: she was just saying hello). However, being based at Yonsei University meant that I quickly found my feet and attending the KLI allowed me to be able to improve my spoken Korean language skills.

Outside of classes everyday brought something new and interesting, whether that was getting my black belt in Taekwondo or pretending to be an actor and playing the part of a criminal English teacher on the national news.
Japan

The study abroad programme in Japan is currently expanding significantly as the number of students studying Japanese at SEAS increases. Thus, SEAS currently maintains links with twenty-two partner institutions across Japan. These universities are carefully chosen to offer the best learning environments for our diverse group of students and over the years SEAS has built a good working relationship with them all.

The first day of September 2007 saw me drag my huge suitcase over the threshold of the all-male dormitory at International Christian University (ICU). So began a year-abroad experience in which I went through dorm initiations, completed intensive language classes and successfully set up a life for myself in suburban Tokyo.

ICU has a reputation for language study and four hours of Japanese language classes everyday meant I could not fail to build upon the solid base two years at Sheffield had given me. Luckily I was able to offset the stress of daily homework and weekly tests by fulfilling the dorm motto of "let's have a crazy fun time". My dorm mates became my family and I was able to practice my Japanese and become true friends with them all. The communal lifestyle, along with the shared dorm bath gave me an insight into Japan which few other universities can provide. The fantastic support the university gave to me as a deaf student also allowed me to both access and get the most out of my year abroad experience. As an ex-student I receive the ICU alumni newsletter. Every time I read it I remember not only the challenges the university posed for me but also all the fun I had overcoming them.


Moreover, I managed to save up enough money to fund a trip for two months to China and Mongolia during my summer vacation. The following summer I returned to Korea to work in a travel agency as part of an internship programme designed normally for those at the end of their year abroad. During this time I managed not only to greatly improve my Korean ability but also take guided tours for various dignitaries, including the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales. I would quite happily do it all again in an instant and have no doubt that my Korean ability would not have improved as much without the year abroad programme.

Paddy Ellen (BA in Korean Studies).
In 2004 I decided to leave my job as a translator with the European Union in Brussels and move to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At the same time, I had recently completed an MA in Advanced Japanese Studies by Distance Learning and was waiting for the results of my final exams. I was intending to return to a career in bilingual lexicography, which I had specialized in before taking the job in Brussels. I contacted Longman, among other publishers, to enquire about work. When they told me they were very busy with a Japanese project, I mentioned my Master’s degree from Sheffield. They were sceptical at first as I had never worked on a Japanese project before so it took a second phone call to convince them at least to give me a test. It was on the very day that I was leaving Brussels to start a new life in Brazil that I received an e-mail message telling me the Japanese team had approved my test and wanted me to join the project as a freelance editor.

My first job was to comment on the accuracy of the Japanese translations of English example sentences for what was later to become the Longman Eiwa Jiten (Longman English-Japanese Dictionary). Thereafter, I was asked to take on more duties, acting as intermediary between the Japanese editors in Tokyo and the English team in the UK. This culminated in the first of my many trips to Tokyo to give lexicography training and support to the Japanese editors, and eventual promotion to English managing editor. My somewhat bizarre position of managing lexicographers in Britain and Japan from my home in Brazil is testimony to globalization and the power of the internet.

Our objective at Longman was to produce a totally new English-Japanese dictionary, primarily for the Japanese senior high school market, in anticipation of the new, communicative approach to English teaching being adopted in Japan. We faced stiff competition from Japanese publishers, who had long had the market to themselves. Our unique selling point was that all the English material in the dictionary would be compiled by native speakers, with all the associated information and example sentences drawn from Longman’s 330 million-word corpus of contemporary English. The existing English-Japanese dictionaries were full of quaint and old-fashioned English, with stilted and unnatural-sounding examples. In addition, the Japanese translations tended to be as literal as possible, obscuring the real differences and equivalences between the two languages. Longman had also developed a unique, 50 million-word corpus of Japanese to assist the Japanese editors in producing natural Japanese translations in language that high-school students could identify with. The final result was published in late 2006 and has attracted a loyal following, despite some lingering resistance from the “old school”.

For me, the process of seeing the dictionary through from conception to publication was an extraordinary experience. My understanding of how Japanese really works increased immeasurably, and I also met a large number of fascinating and talented people along the way. One of the most memorable moments was having to give a presentation in Japanese on the merits of our dictionary to a hard-boiled Japanese sales team. I had never imagined that those oral presentation sessions at Sheffield summer school would one day stand me in such good stead.

For more information on the new Longman English-Japanese Dictionary, please visit: http://www.kirihara.co.jp/longman-eiwa
New books by SEAS staff

Chinese Economic Development
By Chris Bramall
Routledge, 2008

Professor Chris Bramall’s latest book outlines and analyzes the economic development of China between 1949 and 2007. Far from being narrowly economic, the book addresses many of the broader aspects of development, including literacy, morality, demographics and the environment.

Whilst having a broad sweep, the book does not shy away from controversial issues. For example, there is no question that aspects of Maoism were disastrous but Professor Bramall argues that there was another side to the whole programme – the Maoist era was one during which rural literacy, rural health care, rural industry and infrastructure all expanded rapidly. Since 1978, China’s neo-authoritarian state has dismantled the institutions of socialism. However, and whilst there is no doubt that this process has helped to spur China’s extraordinary pace of economic growth over the last three decades, that growth could not have occurred without the foundations laid during the late Maoist era. Moreover, as this book demonstrates, China’s breakneck growth has come at the cost of spiralling inequality and devastating environmental damage. Ultimately, it becomes clear that unless radical change takes place, Chinese growth will not be sustainable.

This comprehensive text will be of interest to all those studying the economic history of China as well as its contemporary economy.

Human Resource Management in Ageing Societies: perspectives from Japan and Germany
Edited by Harald Conrad, Viktoria Heindorf and Franz Waldenberger
Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

The Demographic Challenge: a handbook about Japan
Edited by Florian Coulmas, Harald Conrad, Annette Schad-Seifert and Gabriele Vogt
Brill, 2008

Dr Harald Conrad, Sasakawa Lecturer in Japan’s Economy and Management in SEAS, has recently co-edited two new books.

On the one hand, *Human Resource Management in Ageing Societies* brings together leading experts in the field from Japan and Germany to present and discuss how the challenges of an ageing workforce are being addressed in their respective country. Individual chapters describe employment trends at market and firm levels, investigate the impact of employment practices, labour market policies and pension systems, and make policy recommendations. As Japan and Germany experience the fastest demographic change among industrialized economies, this analysis may well serve as reference for other countries.

On the other hand, *The Demographic Challenge* explores the challenges demographic change poses to contemporary Japan. This extensive handbook comprises sixty-three articles and brings together a group of international scholars of various disciplinary backgrounds to explore a range of issues related to the world’s fastest demographic transition. Topics include the dynamics of gender roles, images of age, policy formation, labour market structures, the pension system, living arrangements and ethical values to name but a few.
Congratulations to Ben Jackson (BA in Korean Studies with Japanese, 2004) who has just been awarded an Anglo-Korean Society Bursary for a forthcoming research project on “protected trees” in the Seoul area. This project also includes an investigation into famous historical and literary trees. Ben’s goal is to produce a paper on the subject and also set a course for further research on and translation of material concerning natural history and literature.

After graduation, Ben remained in Sheffield and worked on two documentary films about North Korea, before moving to South Korea in 2006. Ben Jackson is now studying for an MA in Korean Literature at the University of London and is also working as a translator in Seoul.

Branching out

When I heard on a news bulletin in early 2007 that the London Stock Exchange (LSE) had signed a memorandum of understanding with the Tokyo Stock Exchange (TSE) my ears pricked up. Having graduated from Sheffield in Japanese and Business Studies back in 1996, I have always tried to keep eyes and ears open for opportunities to use my Japanese at work. I looked into these developments a little further, and by the end of the year I had joined the LSE to work on the project. I am the Business Development Manager for the new Tokyo market that we are launching in early 2009, called Tokyo Alternative Investment Market (AIM), which is based upon a similar regulatory structure to the London AIM. As the nature of a joint venture requires close contact with both parties, I am currently splitting my time between Tokyo and London.

My role includes developing a network and taking feedback from a wide range of stakeholders in Japan, from investors and advisors to brokers, accountants and lawyers. Only a few people predicted the recent credit crunch and the financial crisis that has deeply shaken global confidence. Statistics echo the sentiment that companies are finding it more difficult to raise funds and are delaying public flotations. The crisis means that now, more than ever, our stakeholders are on the look out for new opportunities and ventures to develop business and create value. With the TSE we are working to ensure that the new market will be built in an appropriate way for all the market participants to benefit. Joint ventures are a long-term commitment, requiring time for both sides to understand each other and work on joint objectives. Taking the long-term view also means that we will all be ready for the upturn.

Having Japanese language as a key skill has always opened doors for me. It catches the attention. I realized this back at University when I was applying for summer work placements. Since then, I spent seven years as a freelancer, working with computer games and mobile phone firms that were developing business between the UK and Japan and would never have been able to secure contracts without my Japanese language background. Being involved with Japanese business groups both in London and Tokyo means that I have met many top decision-makers in UK-Japan business circles. Contacts matter a lot, and meeting them through high level introductions underlines credibility even more. The communication skills I have learnt through speaking Japanese have further underlined a key belief of mine: enthusiasm counts just as much, if not more, than expertise.

Despite the current economic downturn, Anna Dingley (BA in Japanese and Business Studies, 1996) explains why it is not all doom and gloom out there with Japanese under your belt.
An ancestor of mine, William Edward Williams (1844-1912), went by the penname Gwilym Alltwen and was a Welsh bard. He won a number of bardic chairs in the Welsh Eisteddfod during the 1870s, and was fairly well-known in his day. Around the same time, on the other side of the world, another respected poet was penning lines of Chinese poetry in Japan. His name was Nakai Hiromu (1838-1894), although he went by the penname Ōshū Sanjūn. It is the life of Nakai Hiromu that I have chosen to explore for my doctoral research at Kyoto University because without him the history of Anglo-Japanese relations might have been radically different.

Nakai was a samurai who travelled around Britain from 1866-7. He tells us of this adventure in his published journal, *A Travel Sketch of the West: A New Account of Crossing the Seas*. Upon his return to Japan, Nakai was appointed to the government’s new Foreign Department where it was his job to accompany foreign dignitaries on their visits in Japan. One of these visits proved to be a great turning point for Anglo-Japanese relations.

On 23 March 1868, British Ambassador Harry Parkes and his entourage, including famed Japanophiles, Ernest Satow and Algernon Mitford, were on their way to an audience with the Emperor Meiji. As the procession moved along the streets of Kyoto, two rogue samurai brandishing swords charged into the line hacking at whoever they could. Nakai managed to stop and behead one of the men and the other was later caught and executed. Should these men have succeeded in killing the British ambassador the fate of Anglo-Japanese relations would have taken quite a different path. Would there have been an Anglo-Japanese Alliance? Would there have been British cooperation in the development of the Japanese navy?

For his heroics, Nakai was presented with a decorative sword and a letter of thanks from Queen Victoria’s government (these items are now housed in the Kyoto National Museum along with a number of letters and other artefacts). However, Nakai has largely been forgotten by the history books both in Japan and elsewhere. Despite his close personal contacts with the Japanese government elites, he only rose to the level of prefectural governor, in both Shiga and then Kyoto prefectures. I have thus made it my task to inform the world about Nakai Hiromu. As governor of Shiga, he was involved in the construction of the Sosui Canal which brings Kyoto its water from Lake Biwa. As governor of Kyoto, he also assisted in the building of Kyoto’s famous Heian Shrine.

My poet ancestor was a civil engineer. He worked on the construction of the Betws-y-Coed to Ffestiniog railway, the Caernarvon to Llanberis railway, the Manchester Ship Canal and some of the Cheshire railways. I sometimes wonder whether Nakai Hiromu, on his travels around Britain, ever took a steam train on one of those lines. Although Gwilym was not quite the public hero Hiromu was, I like to think of these two men as my personal heroes.
Introducing the general public to various aspects of Chinese language and culture is an important part of the Confucius Institute’s remit. The Institute is often approached by local schools and enterprises to organize workshops, from Chinese calligraphy to traditional folk dancing and cookery. Last year, it received a less common, but all the more interesting, opportunity to teach a Chinese calligraphy workshop – literally behind bars. Wakefield Prison, one of the largest high-security prisons in the UK, approached the Confucius Institute with the idea of including calligraphy into the institution’s annual Diversity Week.

“Diversity Week has been held within the Prison Estate for approximately five years now,” according to Simon McDonnell, Diversity Manager at Wakefield Prison. “This event is about raising awareness and education, and helps to integrate individuals from many backgrounds and abilities who live in a confined and sometimes testing environment. It builds both offender and staff interaction, promoting dynamic security and in turn creating a safer environment for all to live in.”

Teaching calligraphy at Wakefield proved to be a new and exciting experience. The Chinese language instructors met their first group of students, accompanied by prison staff, early in the morning. There was little talk beyond the workshop content, after all the instructors were not there to ask questions – this was a task left to the students.

And ask they most certainly did. How many characters does Mandarin Chinese have? Could you think of a Chinese name for my daughter? How popular is calligraphy in China nowadays? And how about Confucius – was he a good calligrapher? Mrs Dai Xiaolin, one of the Chinese teachers, was impressed, “Some students even attended the same class twice. I was moved by their passionate interest in Chinese culture.” In terms of attendance, the calligraphy workshop was one of the most popular activities of Diversity Week.

Everyone involved certainly learned a lot from the day spent at Wakefield Prison. The Chinese language teachers were kindly shown around the prison and all their questions were patiently answered by staff members. What most impressed them was the general approach towards inmates – firm, and yet communicative. The strict daily routine within the prison supports talents and interests that could develop into a regular activity, perhaps into a new beginning. In line with this system, Diversity Week is one of several educational and informative events held at Wakefield Prison during the year.

Feedback has been very positive and the Confucius Institute has been invited to deliver the workshop again during Diversity Week this year – an invitation accepted with great pleasure.
Over the last few decades, questions of gender and sexuality have become an increasingly important area of inquiry in many academic disciplines, including film studies. In the case of Japanese cinema, however, this topic has attracted relatively little attention. Although some work exists on sexual representations, this has largely been restricted to a consideration of conventional gender roles and the representation of masculinity and femininity.

Although I am certainly interested in these areas, my project also aims to investigate a range of sexualities, including homosexuality and transvestism. I am particularly interested in how subversive sexual imagery and taboo-breaking are utilized for the purpose of social and political criticism. For example, the film Pig Chicken Suicide (1981), directed by the cult filmmaker Matsui Yoshihiko, displays a range of “grotesque” bodies, both human and animal, and “perverse” sexualities in order to challenge prevailing views of what is “normal” and question the Japanese “Emperor system”.

I am also interested in how issues of sexuality are expressed through the language of cinema and how sexual radicalism has made use of avant-garde aesthetics. For example, I am currently looking at Matsumoto Toshio’s ground-breaking film, Funeral Parade of Roses (1969). This is a modern and twisted version of the Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex that features a young transvestite working in a gay bar in Tokyo. My research not only explores the ways in which gays and transvestites are portrayed but how these representations subvert the conventional divide between “men” and “women”. In doing so, I also examine how the treatment of cross-dressers in the film is linked to the director’s attempts to question objective reality and suggest alternatives.

My project also involves an examination of the relationship between avant-garde aesthetics and feminist politics in the films of Idemitsu Mako, a Japanese filmmaker based in New York. This includes an assessment of how her films question the ideological construction of “motherhood” and “family” and give voice to the contradictory experiences of women.

This is only a brief overview of my current research and some of the films in which I am interested. My host institution, Waseda University, is proving to be an excellent place to be based given its extensive holdings of archival materials on cinema and theatre. And, of course, Tokyo is a terrific place for any cinephile as there are always interesting, and often rare, films to catch up on in the numerous cinemas.
East Asian Studies degrees

The School of East Asian Studies offers a wide range of single and dual honours degrees, as well as postgraduate taught and research degrees. For further information, contact seas@sheffield.ac.uk, or see the School’s webpages: http://www.shef.ac.uk/seas

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Postgraduate research degrees

PhD supervision is available in a wide range of subject areas on China, Japan, Korea and intra-regional studies. In addition, a number of scholarships are available through the White Rose East Asia Centre.

Farewell to SEAS

Both staff and students were saddened to say goodbye to Dr Hyangjin Lee, Lecturer in Korean Studies, who left Sheffield over the summer of 2008 to take up a new position as Professor of Intercultural Communication at Rikkyō University in Tokyo, Japan. Hyangjin first came to SEAS in 1991 and since then has built up an international reputation as a leading scholar of Korean and East Asian cinema. Everybody at SEAS wishes her the best of luck with her new position in Japan.

Dr Hyangjin Lee (right) with Professor James Grayson, Head of Korean Studies.

Collaboration with partners in Japan

The White Rose East Asia Centre (WREAC), established by the Universities of Sheffield and Leeds in 2006, has concluded an agreement with the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) in Tokyo to promote academic and research collaboration.

All of these institutions have a common interest in advancing knowledge of Japan and from now on will begin to pursue joint research projects of mutual interest, welcome each other’s staff members as visitors, and organize seminars, workshops and conferences together. As a first step in this direction, the DIJ’s Dr Axel Klein visited SEAS in November and December to assist in teaching and screen a documentary he has produced on Japanese elections.

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