

THE LOTUS

BLOCK 3 NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2024

GAYLORD PRIZE RECIPIENTS REPORT BACK

BY MEENA KIM '25

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE IN THE MODERN WORLD

During Block 7, I completed an independent study in Shanghai, China on traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). As someone initially skeptical of TCM, I wanted to dive into the history of TCM and explore why it continues to be used today. In addition to practicing Chinese for my minor, I wanted to look at TCM through the lens of a biology major and explore current research related to TCM.

A TRIP TO SHANGHAI'S TCM MUSEUM

While in China, I got the chance to visit Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. This university has an extensive museum that covers the rich history of traditional medicine. I saw artifacts that spanned from ancient dynasties to the modern day. Here, I got to learn about the longstanding history of traditional medicine and the notable contributions that turned TCM into what it is today. Some of the most interesting artifacts showed China's cross-cultural exchanges in the medical field.



CONSULTATION WITH A TCM DOCTOR

One of my goals for this project was to receive a consultation from a TCM doctor. With the help of Meixi Chen, former Chinese CPC and student at Fudan University, I visited Fudan's school clinic and interviewed their TCM doctor, Dr. Chen (陈婷). I had also gotten sick at this time, so my consultation was focused on that. My consultation consisted of two parts: 1) listing my symptoms and 2) 切诊 (qie zhen), which roughly translates to pulse feeling and palpating. Though it was a bit early to tell for sure, the doctor told me that I most likely have 风寒感冒 (feng hang an mao - anemofrigid cold). The most interesting thing I learned from my diagnosis is that there are two different kinds of colds in traditional medicine: 风寒感冒 (feng hang an mao) and 风热感冒 (feng re gan mao - anemopyretic cold). Dr. Chen prescribed me two kinds of medication for my cold: 复方甘草口服溶液 (licorice oral solution) and 正柴胡饮颗粒 (Bupleurum granules).



Although the school clinic is no longer allowed to prescribe "raw" herbal medicine, they can prescribe medication that contains herbal medicine extracts. The medication that I took included ingredients like ginger, licorice, bupleurum (柴胡), and saposin root (防风). One of the medications also explicitly stated that the medicine is for 风寒感冒 (feng hang an mao). This was a big contrast from the US where there is only one kind of cold, and you will take medicine that covers all the symptoms of a generic cold.

I returned to see the doctor a second time, and I wanted to learn more about her experience as a TCM doctor. Some of the questions I asked her included:

1. WHY AND HOW DID YOU BECOME A TCM DOCTOR?
2. WHERE DID YOU ATTEND SCHOOL?
3. HOW IS TCM EDUCATION DIFFERENT FROM WESTERN MEDICINE EDUCATION?
4. WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON REASONS AND ILLNESSES YOU SEE AS A TCM DOCTOR?
5. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORKING AT A SMALLER CLINIC AT FUDAN AND A BIGGER HOSPITAL?

Dr. Chen said that going into TCM was not one of her top choices when taking the 高考 (gaokao - college entrance exam). Despite not scoring high enough to get into her top choices, she attended Shanghai University of TCM (the same school that has the TCM museum I visited). When I asked her about why people turn to traditional medicine rather than Western medicine, she said there are two different cases. Firstly, there are people who believe that TCM is more effective or simply grew up using TCM in their family. The second type of people are those who are unable to be treated using Western medicine. One thing that the doctor continuously emphasized was the holistic nature of TCM. Rather than focusing on the specific symptoms in one area, traditional medicine looks at the synergistic balance of the whole body. I think this is one of the most important and defining characteristics of TCM. Our bodies are made of systems that work together, not isolated parts that are independent from one another.

CONTINUE PG. 2



BEIJING TONG REN TANG (北京同仁堂) INTERVIEW

During my time in China, I saw how accessible and common Chinese herbs were. In the Shanghai Hopson One shopping mall, there is a store called Beijing Tong Ren Tang (北京同仁堂) that sells Chinese herbs. Though these are not the same herbs that can be prescribed by a TCM practitioner, they are easily accessible and ready for anyone to purchase.

I interviewed a worker there and asked them the following questions:

- 1. HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT HERBAL MEDICINE? WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR WORKING AT BEIJING TONG REN TANG?**
- 2. WHAT IS THE DEMOGRAPHIC OF PEOPLE WHO BUY CHINESE HERBAL MEDICINE?**
- 3. WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON REASONS THAT PEOPLE BUY HERBAL MEDICINE?**
 - A. ARE MOST PEOPLE BUYING FOR THEMSELVES OR OTHER PEOPLE? (EX: FOR ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER)**
- 4. WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMONLY PURCHASED HERBS?**
- 5. HOW ARE THE HERBS PREPARED OR SUPPOSED TO BE USED?**
- 6. ARE THE HERBS HERE THE SAME OR DIFFERENT FROM THE ONES THAT ARE PRESCRIBED BY DOCTORS AT TCM CLINICS/HOSPITALS?**

The worker that I interviewed provided a lot of insight into

herbal medicine in China. The first thing I learned was that the herbs they sell aren't actual medicine. Their products are usually given as gifts because they are thought to boost the immune system. (transition) I assumed that the customers mainly consisted of an older demographic, but the worker said that people of all ages buy products for themselves and others. She said that 冬虫夏草 (dongchongxiacao - cordyceps) is the most commonly purchased product. A simple search online revealed that cordyceps boasts many benefits like antitumor, antifatigue, and antioxidant effects. The average consumer is probably not doing basic research on the safety of consuming certain herbal products, in addition to the potential harm from combining different active ingredients.

To sell products, workers are not required to have any formal training or education in traditional medicine. This makes sense because they are not prescribing medication, their job is to sell products. When I told her that most Americans are skeptical of TCM, she said that many Chinese people also don't believe in its efficacy. Among the people who do believe in TCM, they often turn to Western medicine because it works faster. As the doctor at Fudan mentioned, the worker said that many people turn to Chinese medicine if they have a chronic condition that is unable to be cured with Western medicine.

READING SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE ON TCM

Following my interviews and visit to the Shanghai Museum of TCM, I wanted to look at current research that uses or tests the efficacy of herbal medicine. A lot of the benefits of TCM seem to be anecdotal, and this is where a lot of people's skepticism, including mine, stems from. By reading scientific articles, I hoped to see whether people's skepticism was valid, or there was substantial evidence for traditional medical techniques.

The most commonly referenced breakthrough in the field of TCM research was that of Tu Youyou (屠呦呦). In 1967, Tu was the head of a "covert operation" called Project 523, and the purpose of this project was to look for antimalarial drugs. After screening over 2000 preparations of Chinese herb, Tu and her team evaluated 380 extracts to finally see antimalarial effects in 青蒿 (qinghao - artemisinin). Tu later went on to receive a Nobel Prize for her discovery.

As I looked for more current research in TCM, I found a study using Zhi-Zhen-

Fang (ZZR), a formula derived from TCM, to treat multidrug-resistant colorectal cancer. ¹⁷ This paper stood out to me because I haven't seen a lot of scientific research that combines aspects of history and modern science. In the study, they found that ZZR demonstrated anticancer effects and increased sensitivity to chemotherapy drugs in multi-resistant cancer. Like Tu Youyou's discovery, it seems that combining traditional and modern medicine could result in new and more effective approaches to many ailments.

There is certainly a long way to go for most herbal medicine experiments to reach clinical trials and get approved for medical use. The stigma around TCM, especially in the Western world, is also another obstacle that TCM researchers must overcome. I think this work is still important and valuable because TCM research expands the possibility of treatment for many conditions and can contribute to safer usage of herbs by consumers.

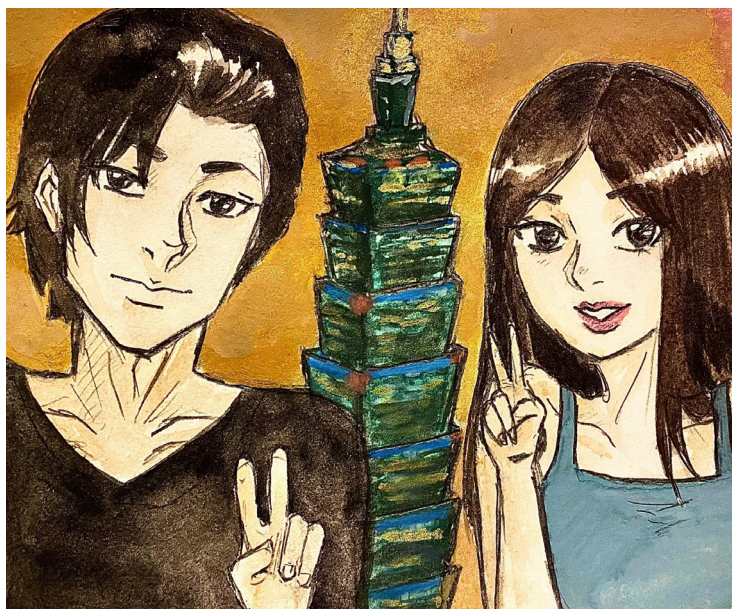
OVERALL REFLECTIONS

Being able to immerse in Chinese culture and history was an enjoyable experience on its own, but pursuing independent study pushed me to explore more of China and talk with people that I would not have sought out otherwise. It helped me to get out of my comfort zone and I realized that my language skills were more proficient than I had thought. This topic also helped to expand my knowledge and horizons both within TCM and the scientific field.

This project could not have been completed without the help of funding from the Asian Studies department. Special thanks to Yue Xing (2023-2024 Chinese CPC), Meixi Chen (2022-2023 and 2024-2025 CPC), Professor Hong Jiang, and Professor Fanny Zhang for helping me throughout this project!

BY KALIE CHANG '26

AN INTRODUCTION TO TAIWANESE



5) Model Dialogue: Meeting New People

Chuen Giao: Líheh!

Jih Bing: Lí hènñ bo?

Chuen Giao: Hènñ! Góa kiò Chuen Giao. Lí kiò sá-mih miah?

Jih Bing: Góa kiò Jih Bing. Lí Jiah bah bey?

Chuen Giao: Ah bey jiah png. Lí kam-si bi gok lang?

Jih Bing: M̄ sī, góa silíbuen lang.

Chuen Giao: Líbuen lang? Góa ga hi líbuen. Góa si dai-wan lang.

Jih Bing: Chuen Giao, lí gui hue?

Chuen Giao: Góa jī-cháp jī hue. Lí gui hue, Jih Bing?

Jih Bing: Góa sa cháp gō hue. Lí ga hi sah mi?

Chuen Giao: Góa ga hi tak manga gah chit teh. Lí ga hi sah mi?

Jih Bing: Góa gah hi pa giu. Gin a git chong juáh.

Chuen Giao: Hènñ... pháinn-sè, góa beh tsu ki ah.

Jih Bing: Chài-kiàn!

Language is a very important aspect of a person's identity and culture as it signifies the region and culture the speaker is from. While my upbringing as a Chinese and Taiwanese American in the United States has exposed me to various cultures, I found it challenging to feel fully connected with various aspects of Taiwanese culture since Taiwanese is a language that I did not grow up speaking. As a student aspiring to pursue a career in international business, I found that having a deep understanding of different cultures is crucial to collaboration and building strong relationships. In an effort to connect and learn more about Taiwanese culture, I wanted to fulfill one of my goals of creating a Taiwanese textbook that can support my proficiency in the language.

Through funding from the Gaylord Prize for Independent Study Research in Asian Studies, I was able to create *Introduction to Taiwanese, Chapters I - II*, a study resource geared towards Taiwanese Americans with prior knowledge in Mandarin Chinese. The intention of this book is to help Taiwanese Americans at the high school or university level develop their understanding of the Taiwanese language and culture, and comprehensively build communication competencies across the listening and speaking skill areas. It also aims to empower Taiwanese Americans and the Taiwanese diasporic people in the United States through language and cultural preservation and education. This textbook contains vocabulary that focuses on practical conversation (such as greetings and food-related words), as well as grammar notes, model dialogues with recorded audio from native Taiwanese speakers, language practice exercises, and articles on unique aspects of Taiwanese culture.

The image to the left is the Model Dialogue, which showcases a potential conversation in Taiwanese between two people. Each Model Dialogue in the textbook is accompanied by an audio recording of two native Taiwanese speakers to support the learner in their pronunciation and listening skills.

Introduction to Taiwanese, Chapters I - II is currently available as an Open Education Resource in collaboration with the Charles L. Tutt Library. The textbook can be accessed on DigitalCC (<https://digitalcc.coloradocollege.edu/record/7485?v=pdf>) and on the OER Commons website (<https://oercommons.org/courses/introduction-to-taiwanese-chapters-i-ii>).



GAYLORD PRIZE FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY RESEARCH IN ASIAN STUDIES

The purpose of this prize is to encourage and support independent work by students interested in Asia and Asian diasporas. Prizes will be awarded for projects proposed by both individuals and small groups. Students are encouraged to consider group projects in which they can learn from and motivate each other. Independent work will be broadly interpreted to include both independent research and other projects that enhance understanding of the Asian region and Asian diasporic experiences.

All applicants must have taken at least two courses in Asian Studies. Gaylord-funded research may not be undertaken while the student is enrolled in a CC course or study abroad program, however, many students choose to conduct Gaylord-funded research immediately after such a course or program concludes or during extended breaks.

Students who have received a Gaylord Prize may apply again in subsequent years. Such projects will only be considered if funding remains after awarding viable first-time applications. They will thus receive lower priority than first-time applications.

Please contact Professor Jason Weaver (jweaver@coloradocollege.edu) with any questions you have about the award program.

For more information visit: <https://www.coloradocollege.edu/academics/dept/asianstudies/grants-and-awards/students/gaylord-prize.html>



2024 ASIAN CLUB POTLUCK

BY SERENA NGUYEN '26

CC WELCOMES RETURNING JAPANESE CPC

MEET NOZOMI HASHIMOTO AND LEARN ABOUT HER PASSIONS AND VISIONS AT CC



NAME

Nozomi Hashimoto

HOBBIES

Cooking, visiting museums, outdoor activities

OFFICE HOURS

by appointment, Armstrong 343

FAVORITE FOOD

eggs, pumpkin, yogurt

Colorado College is excited to welcome back Nozomi Hashimoto as the Japanese Cultural Program Coordinator (CPC) for the 2024-2025 academic year. Having made a significant impact in her first year in the role, Nozomi is committed to further enriching the Japanese language and cultural programs, while continuing her mission to foster cross-cultural understanding and engagement among CC students.

Nozomi, a native of Tokyo, Japan, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role. She earned her bachelor's degree in language education with a minor in psychology, followed by a master's degree specializing in education at International Christian University. After serving as the Japanese CPC for the 2023-2024 academic year, Nozomi has returned to build on her work, particularly in the areas of language teaching and curriculum reform. Her goal is to continue improving and growing the Japanese program to ensure it meets the needs of students at all levels.

The past year was a period of transition for the Japanese program at CC, with the retirement of longtime faculty member Joan Ericson. Nozomi played a pivotal role in navigating this change, helping to reshape and redefine the program for the future. As the program continues to grow, Nozomi remains focused on enhancing student involvement, increasing resources, and creating more opportunities for hands-on learning in both language and culture.

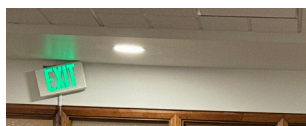
Nozomi's vision for the 2024-2025 year includes several exciting new initiatives designed to provide students with more opportunities for active participation in Japanese language and

culture. This year she plans to continue "Japanese Language Tables", giving students the opportunity to try and learn about authentic Japanese food.

In addition, Nozomi is introducing two new programs: "Japanese Language Labs" and "Japanese Culture Labs". These will provide students with dedicated spaces to engage with the language more deeply and explore various aspects of Japanese culture in a hands-on way. The Japanese Language Labs are held twice a block during Week 1 and Week 2 on Wednesdays. These casual, interactive gatherings allow students to practice Japanese in an informal setting while enjoying a warm cup of tea. The Japanese Culture Labs are held during Week 3 on Friday. The Japanese Culture Lab of Block 2, for example, focused on origami, where students learned to fold a rabbit to celebrate the Japanese Moon Festival.

A highlight of the semester will be a trip to Denver's Botanical Japanese Gardens and a visit to Tokyo Premium Bakery—an authentic Japanese bakery in the Denver. This cultural outing offered a unique opportunity for students to experience Japanese traditions and cuisine outside the classroom.

One of Nozomi's key goals for the year is to increase student-led initiatives within the Japanese program. She believes that student engagement is essential for creating a vibrant and dynamic cultural community. With many new faculty members joining the Japanese program, Nozomi is also focused on fostering collaboration among colleagues to ensure the program's continued growth and success.



BY CHLOE JUNG '27

LOVE GROWS IN YOUR MOUTH:

HAN DAE SU AND MUSIC OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC



On May 16, 1961, General Park Chung Hee, backdropped by an unstable democratic system “paralyzed by internal rivalries,” social stagnation, and an impoverished people, successfully launched a military coup, historically marking the death of the Second Republic and the birth of his 18-year-rule as ‘president’ of South Korea. The following two decades would be ones of radical demonstrations, indignant dissidents, and a newly written autocratic constitution called the Yushin Order. It was amidst this era of censorship, demonstration, and military rule that the godfather of Korean folk music arose.

Han Dae Su, born in Busan on March 12, 1948, was a child of both the West and East. His father, an aspiring student of nuclear physics, left Han with his mother at an early age to pursue his studies at Cornell University in the United States but vanished shortly upon his arrival. After his father’s mysterious disappearance and his mother’s remarriage, Han decided to venture across the Pacific to New Hampshire and New York and it was there that he began to write his songs, heavily inspired by the raging folk music scene and the hippie movement of the 60s. But his father’s sudden reappearance with a white American wife left Han confused and despondent

and, after a sympathetic and pleading invitation by his mother, he returned to Seoul in 1968.

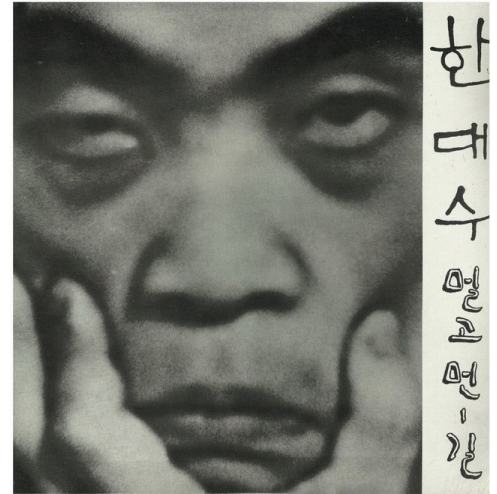
Performing in clubs and bars, Han found an eager audience in the youth of Seoul. One day, a performance of his was stumbled upon by Lee Baek Won, a producer for TBC (one of the two TV channels of that time) who offered him a spot on his nighttime variety show after listening to his set. His performance on TBC the next night was a raging success and Han found himself getting recognized in town and on the street. His notoriety was put on pause when he was drafted for mandatory Korea military service in 1971 but immediately upon his return in 1974, he released his first album (“The Long, Long Road”) with the famous song 물좀주소 (Gimme some water).

However, his successful musical career was not going unnoticed. Culturally, there had already been circulating discourse about the wild American hippies and their crazed rampage of sex, drugs, and ‘freedom.’ Politically, South Korea and the U.S., while not adversaries, held a rocky relationship throughout the Yishin era. The two countries had mutual dependence in that Park, despite his “nationalist inclinations and deep-rooted distrust of U.S. intentions,” could not completely detach South Korea from U.S. support and protection, especially after the Korean War. The United States on the other hand, while unsupportive of Park’s authoritarian regime, understood South Korea’s essential role as an “outpost of the ‘free world’ to contain communist expansion in East Asia” This long haired Korean man who sang about love, freedom, and peace, and whose music emanated the rock and folk styles of America’s finest- there was no doubt in the government’s mind where Han stood. “The Long, Long Road” and the following album “Rubber Shoes” were both subsequently banned in South Korea until the late 80s, when the Yishin era finally came to a close.

The anti-government title that Han earned among

the youth caused his songs, especially 물좀주소 (Gimme some water), to become anthems for the many protests for democracy that permeated the 70s and 80s. The students in particular belted them with fiery vigor as they marched through the streets, pleading for civil liberties and freedom of speech. But interestingly enough, in an interview with Han by the Korean Herald, Han denounced this political title. He spoke confidently that, despite the misinterpretation of both the authorities and the activist youth, his songs were about his “thirst for love.” He was “hungry for love and freedom. But freedom was interpreted politically.”

This phenomenon of a man’s unintentional but profound effect on history truly hit me hard. The world was not perfect in Han’s time nor is it perfect now- we see its suffering every day, whether through the news, social media, or word of mouth. But love and the love of love exists everywhere, not only in the sphere that we deem ‘political,’ and it is this omniscient status that shows its true power. Let us continue to love everywhere we go, no matter the time or person. We may find its effects snowballing into a much greater movement, just as Han’s love did.



BY GINA JEONG '25

ON NORTH KOREAN POLITICS

Through K-pop, K-dramas, and food, the world is well acquainted with South Korea today. But what about its other half, North Korea? Cloaked in the iron shield the nation-state has created, many aspects of North Korea remains hidden. Despite the country’s efforts to remain in secrecy, information leaks out, informing the rest of the world. The Kim dynastic regime, also known as Baekdu bloodline, that has been reigning the country ever since it was established, is currently facing instability. Based on accessible information to the public, this article summarizes the beginning of the dynastic regime in North Korea, and its current standing today.

CONTINUE PG. 7

The Soviet occupation was pivotal in shaping the North Korean system north of the 38th parallel following Japan's surrender on August 15, 1945. Shortly after, on August 17, Cho Man-sik's 'Pyeongannam-do Preparatory Committee' and Hyun Jun-hyuk's 'Joseon Communist Party's Pyeongannam-do District Committee' emerged, but their actions came under Soviet control as troops were stationed in the area. Kim Il-sung and other members of the '88 Special Brigade' became central figures in the new regime. Following Stalin's directive to establish a bourgeois democratic government, the Soviet military began organizing a central administrative system and party support structure in October 1945. By February 1946, the 'North Korea Provisional People's Committee' was formed, functioning as a provisional government with executive and legislative authority, though under Soviet oversight. In February 1947, the North Korean People's Assembly replaced the provisional committee and prepared for state-building, including creating the Korean People's Army and drafting a constitution. The Korean People's Army was formally established in February 1948, and by April, the North Korean People's Assembly approved the draft constitution. In August, 212 delegates were elected to the Supreme People's Assembly. The first meeting of this assembly was held in September 1948, during which the "Constitution of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea" was officially adopted and Kim Il-sung was appointed as the Prime Minister, marking the formal establishment of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Today, North Korea is governed by Kim Jong-un, the third dictator in its generational leadership. His rise to power began in September 2010 when he was

introduced in the media as the successor to his father, Kim Jong-il. On September 27, he was given the military rank of 'captain' by order of the supreme commander of the People's Army, and the next day he was appointed vice chairman of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party, solidifying his status as heir. Following his father's death on December 17, 2011, Kim Jong-un assumed the highest roles in the party, government, and military. He was declared 'supreme leader of the party, army, and people' at Kim Jong-il's memorial service on December 29, and was named supreme commander of the People's Army the next day. Kim Jong-un cemented his control in 2012 by becoming the first secretary of the Workers' Party and the first vice chairman of the National Defense Committee. In terms of policy, he launched the 'Byeongjin route' in 2013, aiming to balance economic growth with nuclear development. Five years later, in April 2018, he declared the route a success and shifted focus toward economic development.

The North Korean government has utterly failed to serve and protect its people, as evidenced by its abysmal human rights record. Systematic and widespread abuses are rampant, including the denial of basic needs like food, the use of arbitrary detention, and inhumane treatment within its notorious prison camps. These camps, known for their brutal conditions, subject detainees to torture and severe mistreatment. The regime also suppresses fundamental freedoms, severely restricting freedom of expression and movement, while punishing any form of dissent with harsh imprisonment. Additionally, North Korea has been involved in enforced disappearances, even abducting foreign nationals, further demonstrating its disregard for

human rights. Despite multiple efforts by international bodies, such as the UN's Special Rapporteur, to engage the regime in improving these conditions, North Korea has consistently refused to cooperate, showing its indifference to the well-being of its citizens. The government's actions reflect a regime more concerned with control than fulfilling its responsibilities to its people, making it one of the worst violators of human rights globally.

The North Korean government is increasingly losing support from its own people, as shown by the growing dissatisfaction among defectors regarding the country's leadership and living conditions. According to a report from South Korea's Ministry of Unification, only 29.4% of defectors who fled between 2016 and 2020 believed that North Korea's hereditary Baekdu bloodline leadership should be maintained, a significant drop from the 57.3% who supported it before 2000. Meanwhile, the percentage of defectors who opposed the leadership system rose to 53.9%, reflecting widespread disillusionment with Kim Jong-un's regime. Economic hardships further fuel this dissatisfaction, with 72.2% of recent defectors reporting that they never received food rations, a sign of the regime's failure to provide basic necessities. Additionally, over 70% of defectors admitted they relied on markets for food, as the state-run rationing system remains broken since the 1990s. External influences are also increasing, with 83.3% of recent defectors admitting they watched foreign media, showing a rising awareness of the outside world. Despite the regime's attempts to tighten social control, surveillance, and censorship, the disconnect between the government and its people continues to widen.

BY KAROLIS MARGIS '26

WHY DO WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT CENTRAL ASIA?

When I tell students at CC about the time I spent in Kyrgyzstan, all sorts of reactions occur. A recurring theme among these reactions is confusion. My favorite one was "I hear Kurdistan is a dangerous place." I found that many students have trouble pronouncing the country's name, let alone pointing to it on the map. Unfortunately, the same story goes for the other 4 countries of Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. The knowledge about this region is not hidden - anyone who's interested can binge-read thousands of wikipedia articles about it. However, this topic is rarely found among the interests of our students. Now let's take a look at why this is the case.

First of all, one may point out that it's a region so far away from the US, that it's hardly material to the lives of American students. However, one of the most significant themes of US foreign policy of the last several decades was the American presence in Afghanistan, a country just north of Turkmenistan. Moreover, Central

Asia is in between China and Russia - two countries that concern the US foreign policy the most. Those two countries have close economic and political ties with several Central Asian countries. Hence, a deeper look into the situation of the region might help us understand our geopolitical rivals better.

Secondly, one could note that Central Asia has a relatively low population, just over 70 million people. After all, there are several Asian countries with populations higher than this region. However, a low population size has hardly prevented countries from grabbing the attention of headlines across the globe. Be it the Panama papers, war in Gaza or the Beirut explosion of 2020, small countries can have a massive impact on global economy and politics. Therefore, Central Asia should not be disregarded as insignificant based on artificial measures like population size.

Thirdly, some may argue that regions with less

global cultural impact are destined to have fewer people be interested in them. It is true that Central Asian authors seldom make their way to American bookstores. However, this does not mean that their culture is any less fascinating than that of western countries. The ancient Uzbek cities of Samarkand and Tashkent are astounding monuments to the history of the Silk road. They have thousands of stories to tell, myriads of mysteries for you to uncover. Newer cities like Bishkek (capital of Kyrgyzstan) or Almaty (the largest city of Kazakhstan) are open museums of the rich history of the Soviet Union. The culture scene of the region has much to offer for anyone who dares to take a peek.

Overall, historically Central Asia was far from the center of attention not only on our campus, but also in our newsletter. The good news is: the author of this article has decided to shed some light on this topic in the upcoming issues of the Lotus. I am looking forward to this. And hopefully so are our dear readers.

BY ALEXIX (YUAN) CAO

THE SPLIT REPRESENTATION: EVOLUTION OF FEMALE SAME-SEX IDENTITY IN MODERN JAPAN

PART II: BEAUTY VS DANGER: GIRLS COMMITTING SUICIDE



MASUDA YASUMARE

The idealized *douseiai* (同性愛, same-sex love) relationship, portrayed as harmless in literary and cultural narratives, faced a stark reevaluation following the 1911 lesbian double suicide in Niigata Prefecture, which brought the darker complexities of female same-sex relationships into the public eye. This pivotal event underscored the fact that even the most "pure" passionate friendships among young women could lead to dire outcomes, thereby marking such intimacy as potentially perilous. The sensational coverage of this incident initiated a broader societal dialogue on the nature of female same-sex relationships, revealing a profound disconnect between the romanticized literary depictions and the stark realities faced by real individuals.

During the interwar period, particularly between 1925 and 1935, the Japanese media documented an alarming number of female same-sex double suicides, totaling 342 reported cases. This figure, while stark, likely underrepresents the actual prevalence of such tragedies, as many incidents may have gone unreported or unnoticed outside of local contexts. By the 1930s, the cultural and media landscape in Japan had become increasingly attuned to the personal and societal struggles faced by women in same sex relationships, with the media often sensationalizing their stories to highlight broader social issues.

The tumultuous interwar period in Japan, characterized by a sequence of economic calamities, notably shaped the societal landscape in which women in same-sex relationships lived and struggled. The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, a devastating

event, severely disrupted the nation's economic stability, which was further agitated by the financial tumults of the Showa panic in 1927 and the ensuing depression in 1930. These economic upheavals exacerbated the hardships faced by segments of the population already on the margins of societal structures, particularly lesbian women. During this period, the confluence of economic instability and rigid social norms created a hostile environment for women who did not conform to traditional roles. The *ryōsai kenbo* (良妻賢母, Good Wife, Wise Mother) ideology was not only pervasive but also prescriptive, dictating the roles and behaviors expected of women, thereby deepening the divide between societal expectations and the realities of those who lived non-heteronormative lives. Lesbian relationships, often hidden from public view, were antithetical to these family-centric norms, resulting in a form of double marginalization—both for defying gender roles and for their sexual orientation.

Significantly, the economic downturns led to a decrease in female participation in the workforce, which persisted until the end of the Second World War. Many lesbians were employed in factory jobs, which were among the sectors hardest hit by economic fluctuations. The instability of employment not only made daily survival challenging but also heightened the existential precarity of these women. As noted in contemporary accounts, the inability to earn a stable income was a critical factor exacerbating the likelihood of suicide among lesbian factory workers, who often had no financial or social safety nets to fall back on.

The suicides of lesbian couples were not just reported as mere incidents but were sensationalized and woven into the cultural narrative as tales of tragic love or moral caution. Such depictions served to reinforce the existing prejudices and further isolate lesbian women. One notable case was that of Masuda and Saijō, whose relationship ended in unsuccessful double suicide. Their story accentuates the period's complex social dynamics, where Masuda's

masculine appearance and Saijō's more feminine but equally problematic reputation working in the entertainment industry as a revue girl according to societal standards highlighted the harsh realities faced by lesbian women. The media portrayal of their relationship, characterized by its focus on their differing social backgrounds, suggested a narrative shift, viewing these relationships as transcending socio-economic boundaries and challenging prevailing class distinctions.

Thus, the lesbian suicides of this era, framed by the socio-economic turmoil and restrictive societal norms, reflect a wretched chapter in Japan's history. They highlight not only the personal tragedies of those involved but also the broader cultural and economic structures that contributed to their marginalization and despair. This historical context underscores the enduring impact of economic and social ideologies on the lives of marginalized communities, particularly lesbian women, whose struggles and resistances offer critical insights into the complexities of gender and sexuality in early 20th-century Japan.

The phenomenon of lesbian double suicides in Japan has left a profound imprint on literary expressions of lesbian relationships, particularly in the works of male authors who have navigated the themes of allure, danger, and the eventual tragedy associated with such liaisons. This motif has been significantly shaped by historical incidents and the way these relationships were sensationalized and stigmatized, influencing modern literature that seeks to explore the depths of female same-sex love and its societal implications.

Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's "Quicksand (1931)" provides a narrative that interlaces the allure and perceived deviance of lesbian relationships with the cultural and societal boundaries of early 20th-century Japan. The novel recounts the story of Sonoko, who is deeply involved in a tumultuous relationship with Mitsuko, set against a backdrop of male dominance and control. The narrative crescendos to a tragic suicide pact, underscoring the destructive end often attributed to lesbian relationships

in traditional narratives. This portrayal not only reflects the societal fears and fascinations with "dangerous" lesbian relationships but also criticizes the patriarchal expectations that seek to control or define the contours of female desire.

In "Sputnik Sweetheart (1999)" by Haruki Murakami, the complexities of female same-sex love are depicted with a modern sensitivity that contrasts sharply with the traditional sensationalist narratives. The novel delves into the emotional and psychological dimensions of unrequited love between women, illustrating how such relationships can be profound yet fraught with existential uncertainty. The ending of the novel remains unclear as the character Sumire, emblematic of the modern independent woman entangled in a lesbian relationship, potentially ends her narrative in suicide, an echo to the historical trope of tragic lesbian endings that persist in cultural memories.

Both novels highlight the ongoing fascination with the "dangerous" lesbian—a figure both charming and perverse, who operates outside male control and whose stories often conclude with tragedy. This literary treatment echoes the historical context in which lesbian relationships were viewed through a lens of moral panic and sensationalism, influencing how such relationships were perceived and depicted in broader cultural discourses. These literary explorations serve as modern reflections on historical attitudes, continuing the discourse on the complexities of female same-sex relationships, their representation, and the enduring impact of societal norms on people in Japan.



SAIJŌ ERIKO