

# THE LOTUS

BLOCK 2 NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2024



BY: ALEXIX (YUAN) CAO

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

### PART I: DOUSEIAI VS SODOMY: GENDERED NARRATIVES OF SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS

In the rhizome of Japan's cultural and historical narratives, the representation and recognition of sexual minorities offer a revealing glimpse into the evolving dynamics of societal norms and values. Among these, female same-sex identity in Japan presents a particularly compelling study of contrasts—ranging from marginalization and pathologization to periods of subtle acknowledgment and literary romanticization. This paper seeks to unravel the complex evolution of lesbian identity through the lens of Japanese society from the late Meiji period to the post-war 20th century, exploring the interplay between socio-political forces and cultural expressions. This exploration will delve into the dichotomies of Douseiai vs. Sodomy, Beauty vs. Danger, and Normal vs. Abnormal, aiming to unveil the layers of complexity that characterize the evolution of female same-sex identity in modern Japan.

“Douseiai” (同性愛) is a Japanese term that translates directly to “same-sex love” coming from the European concept of “homosexuality,” and began to crystallize, especially after the Meiji period (1868-1912), as a term encompassing both male and female same-sex relationships. This development was influenced significantly by the importation of Western sexological theories, which introduced new classifications for sexual behaviors previously not distinctly categorized in Japanese society. The term “Douseiai” emerged in the early Taisho period (1912-26) as an approximate translation that allowed the Japanese to discuss openly and categorize same-sex desires under a unified conceptual framework. It is used to describe relationships and affections that occur between individuals of the same sex, encompassing both emotional and romantic aspects.

The rise of same-sex love discourse was notably influenced by the creation of educational institutions for women, such as the higher girls' schools established post the

1899 Higher Girls' School Act (*kōtō jogakkō rei*). It led to the establishment of numerous secondary education institutions for girls, which dramatically increased in number from the late 1910s to the mid-1920s. These institutions were not merely educational; they became crucial spaces for the development of a modern female identity—the “schoolgirl” or “jogakusei”. This identity was closely tied to the evolving roles of women in Japanese society, as these schools aimed to mold young women not only as educated individuals but also as ideal partners in heterosexual marriages, as depicted in many works of Meiji literature. The concept of same-sex love emerged and flourished at the same time with the concept of the schoolgirl. These institutions became pivotal spaces where female same-sex relationships could flourish, shielded to some extent from the harsher societal judgments faced by males. School environments, characterized by their all-female populations and the discouragement of socializing with young men, became hotbeds for what was often termed as innocent “same-sex love play” among schoolgirls.

Douseiai has been perceived through a lens that emphasizes the emotional depth and purity of these relationships, particularly among women. In Japanese culture, especially in contexts like all-girls' schools, Douseiai often reflects an idealized form of romantic friendship. It is seen as a beautiful, if sometimes transient, phase of youthful emotionality and aesthetic appreciation, devoid of overt sexual connotations. This perception is deeply influenced by the cultural and educational settings in Japan where female-female relationships could develop openly within the confines of societal norms that value subtlety and emotional connection over physical expressions of love. These relationships were often celebrated in literature and thought of as spiritually uplifting and morally enriching, reinforcing traditional ideals of beauty and emotional depth in Japanese aesthetics.

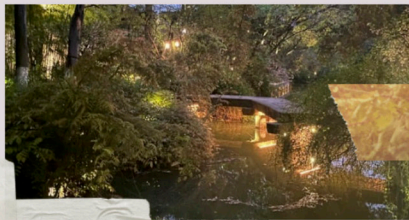
In contrast, “sodomy” refers to a set of behaviors that Western legal and moral frameworks have historically categorized as sexual deviancy. The term originated in Christian doctrine and was codified in many Western legal systems to describe and often criminalize sexual acts that were non-procreative, including homosexual acts. In the context of Japanese adoption of Western norms during the Meiji Restoration and thereafter, sodomy began to be associated specifically with male homosexual acts, which were viewed as violations of natural law and public morality. The importation of the concept of sodomy into Japan brought with it a pathologization of male same-sex relationships, seen as a threat to social order and family structures. In 1924, Sexologist Yamamoto Senji played a pivotal role in differentiating the perceptions of male and female same-sex relationships. He criticized educators for conflating the “immoral practices” of male same-sex love, such as masturbation and sodomy, with what he considered the harmless “platonic love” practiced by schoolgirls.

By relegating female same-sex relationships to the realm of the platonic, Japanese society could maintain a facade of propriety and moral integrity while systematically ignoring the complex realities of women's lives and desires. This approach marginalized female same-sex identities and contributed to the broader invisibility of female sexual agency in Japanese culture. Moreover, this cultural framework perpetuated a narrative that female sexual desires were less intense or relevant compared to male desires, thereby upholding a gendered disparity in the recognition and treatment of sexual identities. Such attitudes underscore the challenges faced by women who deviated from these prescribed roles and highlight the nuanced ways in which female sexuality has been historically negotiated and often suppressed in Japanese history.



# CCIN ASIA 2024

©Nanxun Old Town



Wuzhen scenic area



MOYE RD.



Suzhou Arts & culture venue

TANGHULU at great world



Ruifang district (Chongwen village)



old & new members of the program



Shichahai



datang everbright city

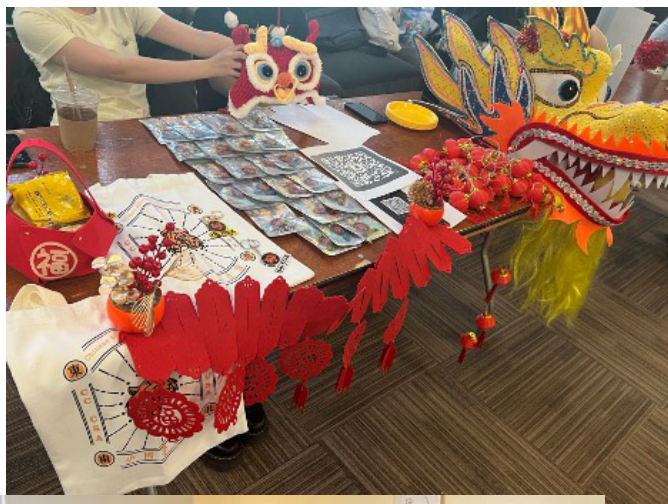




## CLUB SPOTLIGHTS:

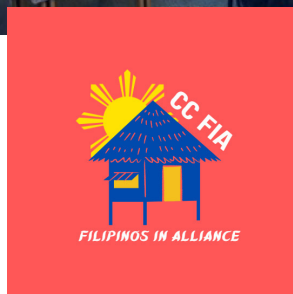
### CHINESE STUDENT ASSOCIATION (CSA)

The **CHINESE STUDENT ASSOCIATION** at our college is dedicated to fostering cultural understanding and community through the celebration of traditional Chinese festivals, such as the Mid-Autumn Festival and Chinese New Year. Our events offer an immersive experience with performances, cultural activities, and authentic cuisine, allowing students to learn about and appreciate Chinese heritage. In addition to these festivals, we also host workshops and social gatherings to promote awareness of Chinese traditions and values. Our club serves as a welcoming space for all students, providing opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and community building. [https://groupme.com/join\\_group/102782487/dPGPWbFg](https://groupme.com/join_group/102782487/dPGPWbFg)



### FILIPINOS IN ALLIANCE (FIA)

Kumusta! We are so excited to finally bring **FILIPINOS IN ALLIANCE (FIA)** to CC and welcome a Filipino community to our campus! FIA is a newly established affinity group club that focuses on fostering a Filipino/Filipino-American community at CC and teaching others about our culture. Our goal is to provide a safe space for Filipino students on campus to feel at home, connect with others of similar background, and to create a learning environment for those who may not be accustomed to Filipino culture. Anyone is welcome to join us as we eat food, make crafts, watch movies, and (of course) sing karaoke! We may be a small group, but we are more than looking forward to introducing CC to aspects of The Philippines and bringing our students closer together. In FIA, we plan to host events such as parol making during Christmas, barbeque grill-out days, karaoke, movie nights, and more! Join us for a fun year full of events and bonding! Salamat! Reach out to us on our Instagram: @cc.fia



### KOREAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION (KASA)

In a predominantly white institution such as Colorado College, we believe that having a comfortable and safe space for all ethnic identities is essential to a thriving and supportive community. The **KOREAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION (KASA)** seeks to provide that space for all students that identify as Korean American, hosting blockly meetings meant for community building, cultural exposure, and just having a good time! In the past year, the resurfacing and re-establishment of KASA has been headed by beloved co-presidents Britt Helgaas and Meena Kim. While we are still getting on our feet, we are excited to welcome all returning and new members and preserve the tradition of Korean American solidarity within our campus. To stay up to date on all KASA events and meetings, take a look at our Instagram account (@cc\_kasa), where we post reminders as well as access to our GroupMe.



BY SERENA NGUYEN '26

# CC WELCOMES RETURNING CPC

## MEET MEIXI AND LEARN ABOUT HER PASSIONS AND VISIONS AT CC



### NAME

Meixi Chen

### HOBBIES

Reading Web novels,  
Photography, Making Fuse Beads

### OFFICE HOURS

Mondays and Fridays 3-5, by  
appointment

### LIFE MOTTO

Faith is Doubt -- Emily Dickinson

Meixi Chen 陈美汐 is the Chinese Cultural Program Coordinator of 2024-25, returning from 2022-23. She grew up in Sichuan, a place famous for its spicy hot pot and pandas. She has received a BA in Chinese Language and Literature from Fudan University, Shanghai, and a second major in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. She is currently studying for an MA in Comparative and World Literature at the same institution, focusing on fan fiction and gender studies.

Academic research on web novels and fandom studies is relatively rare in mainland China. However, Meixi loves to consider fanfiction as a heterotopia within contemporary Chinese literature, where it resists mainstream and commercial discourses in grassroots and marginalized perspectives, particularly challenging patriarchal culture through women's writing. She greatly appreciates the diverse vitality that Chinese popular culture represents in its interaction with the world.

In the past, Meixi has participated in cultural exchange programs in both Issy-les-Moulineaux (France) and Gilbert (AZ), since then she has become interested in introducing Chinese languages and cultures abroad. She was also an exchange student at Wellesley College (MA) in her sophomore year, where she found her keen interest

in comparative literature which allowed her to view the world outside the boundaries of one national language.

Meixi enjoys her past experience working at CC, being with wonderful colleagues and outstanding students, and she misses the days of seeing Pikes Peak at dusk. She hopes to spend another wonderful year with all her friends (old & new!) and looks forward to visiting museums, going on city walks, enjoying outdoor scenery, and doing crafts together.

This academic year, Meixi hopes to organize more fun cultural activities in Chinese Tables (open to all-campus) and house events (with residents in the Chinese & Japanese House). In Block 1, Meixi has already held the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival Celebration with lantern riddle guessing (猜灯谜) and eating mooncakes. More events may include Facial Mask Painting (画脸谱), Making Chinese Knots with fuse beads(拼豆平安结), Making and Flying Kites during the Qingming Festival (放风筝) and Chinese Paper-Cut Art(剪纸). In Block 5, Meixi will organize one of CC's most elaborate annual cultural events, the Chinese Lunar New Year Celebration with CSA. She looks forward to helping prepare for beautiful performances with students learning Chinese and serving authentic Chinese dinner to all-campus.

## Call for Contributors

# Contribute to *The Lotus*!

**The Lotus is a student-run publication of the Asian Studies Program at Colorado College.** Our goal is to help the community gain new perspectives on Asia and the Asian diaspora, as well as share information related to Asian Studies programing and activities on our campus.

We are also excited to make The Lotus a platform for showcasing the works and talents of our student body. We are now accepting contributions from our fellow students related to the study, appreciation, and celebration of Asian and Asian diasporic cultures, identities, and experiences.

We will consider the following contributions for publication in our future issues:

- Your travel stories and experiences of work and study abroad in Asia!
- Your creative works, including creative writing (poems, short stories, essays) and artwork (photographs, illustrations) related to or about the cultures, identities, and experiences of Asia and the Asian diaspora!
- Your reviews of books, films, television, and music related to Asia and the Asian diaspora!

Send your contributions for consideration to [thelotuscc@gmail.com](mailto:thelotuscc@gmail.com) with the subject **"Student Contribution."** Please include your name, year, and a short (no more than 100 words) bio about yourself along with your submission. We encourage contributions from all student backgrounds and perspectives!

Selected contributions will be featured in our student newsletter, and selected contributors will receive a small gift of appreciation.