

**LETTER FROM THE
EDITORS-IN-CHIEF**

**December 9, 2024
Columbia University, New York, NY**

Dear all,

It is our distinct pleasure to present the fourth issue of the *Columbia Journal of Asia* (CJA). Volume III, Issue 1 features scholarly and creative works contributed by undergraduates and recent graduates representing academic institutions across Asia and the United States. The issue is structured into three sections: Articles, comprising long-form academic research papers; Notes, featuring concise scholarly essays; and Creative Works, encompassing an array of artistic, poetic, and literary expressions.

We are thrilled with the disciplinary breadth demonstrated herein—spanning fields such as history, economics, comparative literature, and gender studies—as the selected works engage deeply with themes of sexuality, gender, spatial perception, and consumerism, reflecting multifaceted approaches to the human body in diverse Asian contexts. From the exploration of sex and castration in late imperial Chinese fiction to the interrogation of racial and gender inequality within the Philippine diaspora, the authors present incisive perspectives that collectively invite critical reflection on evolving intersections of body politics and sovereignty.

This year’s volume adopts the theme “Body Politics in the Orient(al),” a focus that builds upon dialogues initiated in our previous edition. In foregrounding this theme, the issue seeks to advance understandings of political, economic, racial, gender, and sexual identities across Asia over time. How might we conceive of bodily autonomy—both individually and collectively? How are bodies and communities regulated or transformed under various sociocultural and legal frameworks?

In shifting from a biannual to an annual publication, this semester has been devoted to fostering dialogue among our editorial team, university faculty, and the broader Columbia University community. We launched the Faculty Interview Series on the “[Forum](#),” a space where our members produce short-form scholarly reviews, critiques, and interviews. The [inaugural installment](#) featured our Editor-in-Chief, Isabella Garcia Bernstein, and Managing Editor, Alice Bai, in conversation with Professor Anupama Rao at Barnard College. During this exchange, Professor Rao offered valuable insights into her scholarship on race, caste, and the university, particularly in relation to B.R. Ambedkar, as well as reflections on public pedagogy, archival practices, and contemporary academic activism.

In recognition of Professor Rao’s contributions, we are also pleased to announce the B.R. Ambedkar Essay Prize, awarded to an undergraduate work of exceptional scholarly merit, whether part of a larger thesis or a standalone article. Selection will be made in late March/early April, with submission guidelines and criteria available in the coming month.

As always, we extend our sincere gratitude to our Faculty Advisory Board for their invaluable support and guidance: Dr. Manan Ahmed, Dr. Neferti X. M. Tadiar, Dr. Manijeh Moradian, Dr. Isabel Huacuja Alonso, Dr. Jungwon Kim, and Dr. Timsal Masud. Our heartfelt thanks also go to our exceptional Managing Editor, Deputy Managing Editor, and Director of Peer Review—Alice Bai, Isabel Andreatta, and Devika Goyal—along with the incredible editors who dedicate countless hours to providing thoughtful feedback on submissions, fostering a vibrant sense of camaraderie, and ensuring the success of our journal. We are deeply grateful to the Columbia University Libraries and our graduate peer reviewers for their patience, expertise, and steadfast support throughout this semester. Finally, we express our profound appreciation to our writers and contributors, whose scholarship and creativity form the core of this publication. Your insights and ingenuity continue to inspire and illuminate our mission to promote critical scholarship on Asia and the Asian diaspora. Thank you all for your dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment to making CJA the best it can be.

Isabella Maganda Garcia Bernstein BC’25

Lochlan Liyuan Zhang GS’25

Editors-in-Chief, *Columbia Journal of Asia*