

EDITORS' NOTE

When we first conceived of the *Columbia East Asia Review* (CEAR) last March, our original intent was to create a casual forum for discussion of undergraduate research on East Asia at Columbia University. We soon realized, however, that both a pressing need and opportunity exists to build something even greater—a global scholarly publication to promote original research and foster idea exchange among undergraduates in the field of East Asian Studies. With that mission in mind and through the efforts of an immensely talented and dedicated group of Columbia students, CEAR has grown over the past year, into a full-fledged online and print academic journal publishing outstanding articles by undergraduate researchers from around the world.

The authors of the inaugural issue of the *Columbia East Asia Review* bring CEAR's focus on original undergraduate research to life. This year's authors refuse to accept easy explanations and instead choose to critically analyze major topics of literature, sociology, law, and history, with a particular focus on the political implications of their studies. Oda Fiskum, the author of this year's Feature Article, carefully analyzes the political utility of Hu Shi's Chinese translation of Henrik Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House*. By comparing the Chinese to the original Norwegian, her native tongue, Ms. Fiskum reveals Hu's subtle manipulation of Ibsen's text to suit his feminist political agenda. In the realm of law, Wei Wei Hsing paints a fascinating and highly original picture of efforts to defend worker's rights in mainland China. Drawing from her extensive field research on Hong Kong-based labor rights organizations, Ms. Hsing's study reveals the shift by such organizations away from a strategy of putting international pressure on the Chinese government toward a localized strategy which melds international and domestic tactics. Turning to contemporary social issues, Benjamin Jacobs uses the careers of Chinese basketball players Yao Ming and Yi Jianlian as a lens to investigate the modern Chinese athlete's careful juggling of commercial opportunity and nationalistic obligation. Finally, Andrew Scheineson's study of the management of water resources in China during the Qing dynasty shows the historical rift between central government directives and local government implementation, a phenomenon that continues to affect the governance of China to this day.

Immediately recognizable in the content of this year's journal is a strong focus on China. The country's growing economic and political importance, compounded by the upcoming 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, has played a major role in the recent surge in undergraduate scholarship in the field of Sinology. The two Research Journals published in this issue help provide a more comprehensive image

of the issues facing the Greater China region. In his journal, Austin Barney explains the history of Tibet and its relation to China's current ruling regime, and relates his own travels and research in ethnic Tibet, while Arfiya Eri's journal tells of her experiences interacting with the Uighur of China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region as an English teacher and researcher. In light of the recent demonstrations against Chinese Communist Party rule in both ethnic Tibet and Xinjiang, these two essays are particularly relevant to representing the cultural, historical, and political diversity of East Asia—a diversity that transcends the modern concept of national borders and sovereignty.

The effort to grow a dynamic undergraduate East Asian Studies community based at Columbia University extends far beyond this journal. All of the articles in this volume plus additional content are available at *CEAR's* online home (www.eastasiareview.org). Moreover, the first Oscar Lee Symposium of Undergraduate East Asian Studies (www.eastasiasymposium.org), an affiliated event, was held at Columbia on April 18, 2008, featuring presentations by nine undergraduate researchers from Columbia on issues relevant to East Asia ranging from economic development in Mongolia to corporate restructuring in Japan to representation of minorities in Chinese film. Interacting with the dozens of talented undergraduates who have contributed to these two projects has strengthened our conviction that there is real potential and need for organizations that facilitate the collaboration and the exchange of ideas in the field of East Asian Studies. With the confidence drawn from the successes of its first year, *CEAR* is better equipped than ever to address this need. It has been a tremendous honor and a privilege to serve as Editors-in-Chief of the *Columbia East Asia Review*.

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