

## *Editorial Reflections on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of The China Quarterly*

# *The China Quarterly* at 50

Julia C. Strauss (Editor since 2002)

It is both a privilege and an honour to be editor of *The China Quarterly* for the publication of its 200th issue. The autumn of 2009 is a time of multiple anniversaries. The People's Republic of China has completed its first 60-year great cycle; and *The China Quarterly* its first half-century. We have invited all of our previous editors to reflect on their life and times at *The China Quarterly*, and on the study of contemporary China more generally.

Since becoming editor in 2002, I have benefited enormously from inheriting a journal that was on firm ground in every conceivable respect: from the solid financial foundation, to our excellent working relationship with our publishers at Cambridge University Press, to the wonderful staff in the office, to – perhaps most importantly – the strong reputation enjoyed by *The China Quarterly* in publishing high-quality original research on China. Like attracts like. We would be unable to attract the high-quality submissions if we did not already have such a strong reputation of attracting the best of scholarship on contemporary China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, and that strong reputation was directly inherited from all the hard work of former editors and staff, sometimes under very challenging conditions. When taking on the editorship in 2002, I wrote that “this is as good as it gets,” and seven years on this is still something to stand by. Over the past half-century *The China Quarterly* has been a publication of consistently high quality, standing apart from but always relevant to the immediate politics of its time in publishing the best scholarly work on contemporary greater China. Such an achievement can only be created and maintained by a long lineage of dedicated and committed editors and staff, and in this *The China Quarterly* has been very fortunate.

Although like does attract like, the contents of *The China Quarterly* do change over time, in response to a combination of what is underway in greater China, the interests and access of researchers, and the particular preoccupations of the incumbent editor. It is perhaps a bit presumptuous for a standing editor to reflect too widely on achievements, as that is best judged by posterity. My particular preoccupation has been to widen the representation of the disciplines and subject matter published in *The China Quarterly*, and to try to ensure as balanced an issue as possible within the boundaries imposed by what is in the publication queue and for how long it has been there. We aim to incorporate work from different disciplinary perspectives – from politics, economics, anthropology, education, international relations, sociology, development, literature and post-1949 history with a range of different methods, including case-study work,

ethnography, documentary research and, increasingly, survey research. Happily, this is successful far more often than not, as getting an appropriate balance of submissions has become an increasingly tricky business. As the pressures to write in styles geared to particular disciplinary audiences have grown, they have combined with more general pressures to publish more, and we see this reflected in significant increases in frequency of submissions. As disciplines have become more rigidly segmented by preoccupation and technical language, and young scholars often have to push out publication quickly, the number of submissions on narrowly conceived topics, often unrevised for a wider area studies readership, has grown with our increase in submissions. But this downside also has an upside. The world of contemporary China Studies is more internationalized than ever, and the biggest trend in the past seven years is the sheer number of quality manuscripts from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and now the People's Republic of China. The other main trend is the increasing number of collaborative research projects between researchers from the People's Republic of China and outside the People's Republic, indeed the article by Liu, Wang, Tao and Murphy in this issue is a superb example of what these kinds of collaborative projects can achieve. Given the increasing interest in China in other parts of the world, notably Africa, India and Latin America, it will only be a matter of time before we begin to see high-quality submissions coming in from scholars based in these parts of the world as well.

It is a great tribute to the quality and commitment of our staff, Raphaël Jacquet and Rowan Pease, that the journal runs as smoothly as it does. However great its reputation, no institution can rest on its laurels, and this is particularly so in the fast-moving and rapidly internationalizing world of scholarship on contemporary China. And as we considered the next 50 years for *The China Quarterly*, the Executive Committee and I thought it important to put *The China Quarterly* on a yet more solid institutional foundation. We have recently revamped the structure of the journal, slimmed down the size of the Editorial Board, and have brought in new procedures to regularize and rotate fixed terms of office for the Editorial Board, the Executive Committee and the Editor. More regular procedures in Editorial Board and Executive Committee appointments will make it possible to bring younger scholars from a wider range of global institutions into the governing structure of the journal, keep closer to much of the field research being done, and avoid some of the more predictable problems inherent to generational transition.

Finally, as editor I have had remarkable opportunities to organize and/or participate in a number of *China Quarterly* special issue conferences and volumes. Special issues give *The China Quarterly* an opportunity to focus on a particular area, often one that does not see a large volume of regular submissions, such as religion, culture, PRC history, or law. If the sales of the stand alone paperback volumes that are republished by Cambridge University Press are any guide, it has been quite gratifying to see how much interest there is in these other, relatively underrepresented topics. The volume just published on China and Africa

is a source of particular satisfaction, as it involved so many Africanists and China scholars, often quite junior, conducting exciting fieldwork in a newly emerging field, and many of the scholars brought together at this meeting have become part of an informal network on China and Africa. *The China Quarterly* hopes to build on a number of the themes articulated at the meeting on China and Africa in September 2008 – broad questions of China’s internationalization, patterns of aid, export of management techniques, and flows of people and capital – by extending these questions to China’s increasing involvement in the world area of Latin America, in a meeting that we plan to hold in the spring of 2011, for an eventual special issue in 2012. This will be my last major project as editor of *The China Quarterly*, and I very much hope that it will be one that reflects both China’s continued “rise” and emergence as a player on the global stage, and *The China Quarterly*’s continued excellence in publishing the very best research on contemporary China for the next half-century.