

EDITORIAL

WITH this issue a new editorial staff assumes responsibility for the *Journal of Asian Studies*. At the same time a portion of the Advisory Editorial Board has been replaced upon the expiry of their terms of office. It is the obligation and the expressed intention of those now responsible for the direction of the *Journal* to raise still further its scholarly quality and to enhance its value to the membership of the Association for Asian Studies. Basically, such improvement will be set within the framework laid down in the editorial penned by our predecessor for the August, 1963, issue of the *Journal*. We invite our readers to read that editorial again, to reacquaint themselves with the fundamental goals of our publication.

Our readers should be reminded that the success of the *Journal* depends upon the cooperation of our membership, as the quality of any academic organ reflects directly the calibre of manuscripts submitted to it. This is especially true for a journal such as ours, which has to present the finest scholarship in so wide a range of disciplinary fields and areal interests. In addition, we rely heavily upon our membership for effective reviews of a wide range of books. Moreover, we depend upon the special competencies of many of our readers to assess the value of manuscripts covering our wide range of interests and areas. The service of our membership in the evaluation of articles makes it possible for a small staff of editors to make the necessary decisions wisely.

In saying this, we exhibit no desire to avoid the task which rightfully has been delegated to the editors. Editors, however, cannot function in a vacuum. If our readers are reluctant to review books, or to submit good manuscripts, or to serve as referees for manuscripts which have been submitted, the burden is thrust back upon the few editors. This problem is exacerbated by the omnipresent publication deadline. Dilatory responses to requests for cooperation in these crucial tasks force the editors to make decisions without benefit of the specialist knowledge required. If the *Journal* is the most important single function of the Association, and its quality substantially reflects the degree to which the membership cooperates with the editors, it follows that all of us must be willing to help when needed.

Your editors actively seek your aid in this task. We will do what we can to merit your confidence and will continue to count upon your academic assistance. With such assistance we can continue to strengthen the *Journal* and make it ever more responsive to the highest needs of Asian studies.

The nature of the Association and the great diversity of disciplines and areal interests arrayed in the ranks of the Association make it imperative that certain criteria be established for the selection of articles to be published. These criteria should be set forth at this point. Insofar as is reasonable, the *Journal* should publish articles which communicate in a meaningful, scholarly manner across disciplines and among areal interests. Publication of the *Journal* is expensive and becomes increasingly so as printing costs mount. The Association has finite resources and several functions to perform. In practical terms this means we cannot publish articles continuously in *all* of the areas of interest to our members or in *all* the disciplines. We are forced to be

selective and, at the same time, we want to make each issue of the *Journal* interesting and valuable to a broad readership. Articles which communicate across disciplines or areas—other things being equal—should be more useful than articles which speak only to the handful of specialists who know a speciality thoroughly.

It would appear to be unhealthy if we were to drift into a situation in which each scholar-member could find, in a given issue of the *Journal*, only one article which his interests and competencies enabled him to read and enjoy. In such a situation, the *Journal* would be serving some members of the Association, but not the membership of the Association. If we consider the costs of publication, this kind of situation would hardly be defensible.

This argument is not designed to insist that all articles published in the *Journal* must be of equal interest—or approximately equal interest—to all members. No rational man would pursue so chimerical a goal. Many fine articles must and will be published even though their audience may be relatively small. However, our pages must also be open to those quality articles which consciously strive to “talk” across the lines which have separated areas and disciplines. This is true primarily because we believe the maturation of Asian studies requires an increased emphasis upon this kind of discourse. Articles which communicate across fields facilitate the sharing of insights and the reciprocal development of the several specialities involved. A fine article on the bureaucracy in pre-modern China, as an example, can be significant for scholars who are in no sense China specialists.

There are barriers enough in the academic world. The *Journal* is not needed to reinforce such barriers. On the contrary, the *Journal* is in a strategic position to facilitate a continuing dialogue among disciplines and areal specialities from which all may benefit. The dialogue must not, however, nourish generalizations that are too broad or are superficial.

To be meaningful, the dialogue must be based upon solid scholarship, depth of learning and genuine disciplinary attainment. The point is that the further development of Asian studies of the highest quality involves increased, careful attention to the linking of insights derived from serious and disciplined study of issues in similar but separate areas. It would, to use another example, be of professional benefit if careful studies of processes of urbanization in southern Asia were—from time to time—to be so reported in our pages as to contribute to similar studies concerned with East Asia. The present Editor and his colleagues welcome scholarly efforts along such lines and will try to encourage them.

Such a role seems especially relevant at present. Recent months have witnessed growth of interest in “comparative studies.” If comparative studies are to be academically fruitful, they must be built upon thorough understanding of the institutions, processes, or phenomena which are to be compared. It is pointless to expand on the egregious errors which could result if comparisons are made in the absence of this kind of intimate understanding of the things which enter into comparative study. The membership of the Association comprises the finest array of the specialized talents which are required.

If our *Journal* pays little heed to the challenge, if our scholarship were content to pursue narrow specializations without thought for the dialogue mentioned above, we would have failed to discharge our obligations and to have utilized our competencies. The individual scholar has the right to pursue only those studies in which he alone

is interested. A journal which seeks to serve the community of scholars, who are specialists on some part of Asia, has a different responsibility. To that end, we will welcome manuscripts of high academic merit which are designed to communicate across disciplines or among areas. To that end, we are prepared to facilitate a high level dialogue, among our members, which can enrich the work of each discipline. It is our hope that such interchanges will prove to be mutually fruitful for all concerned. To achieve these goals, we need the active and thoughtful cooperation of many members of the Association.

Finally, the demands for economy imposed upon us, in the publication of the *Journal*, force us to exercise a strict editorial control. Many articles and reviews are needlessly prolix. If the authors of articles and of reviews are reluctant to economize on space, the editors must do so. We wish to publish only the best materials available, and if we have to sacrifice length in favor of quality, we will make the sacrifice. In this too, we ask your cooperation.