

FOREWORD

In many respects, this issue marks a new era for *The China Quarterly* (CQ) as it reflects several important changes that we believe will allow us to broaden participation, widen access and adapt to the changing landscape of China studies and academic publishing – all while maintaining the journal’s reputation as one of the most respected journals in the field and, indeed, area studies more generally.

As announced in the foreword to our September 2023 issue, the editorial structure of the journal has changed. Tim Pringle, who has guided the journal as editor-in-chief for the last seven years, has been joined by two more editors: Timothy Hildebrandt (Department of Social Policy, LSE) is the first editor from outside SOAS in many years, and Jieyu Liu (Department of Anthropology and Sociology, SOAS) becomes the first Chinese editor of the journal, a milestone that is long overdue. The new structure brings greater disciplinary and methodological diversity into the editorial process, more accurately reflecting the growing diversity of the journal’s submissions. It will also quicken the review and publishing process to ensure that timely research gets into the hands of our readers. Moreover, the new editorial model enables us to institute what we believe is one of the most innovative and important changes in the journal’s history: triple-anonymous review.

Since January 2024, the CQ has used a triple-anonymous review process. As with double-anonymous review, authors and reviewers are not known to each other, but triple-anonymous reviewing adds another layer of anonymity, as the editors also have no access to any information about authors’ identities. This helps editors combat the potential unconscious biases that can occur in academic publishing and that adversely impact earlier-career and lesser-known authors, those from less prestigious institutions, the Global South and non-English speaking countries. Triple-anonymous reviewing remains uncommon in academic publishing; no other China-studies journal has such a policy and few journals outside of philosophy have implemented it. Rarer still is the kind of triple-anonymous review process we have established wherein the author’s identity is unknown to the editors at *all* stages of the review process – until acceptance – rather than at the initial screening stage only. To the best of our knowledge, the CQ is one of the first journals to have instituted such a variant of the policy. We believe that this system will ensure an even fairer and more transparent process long into the future.

Another notable and welcome development has been the rise in quantity and quality of submissions from scholars based in China. As readers will have noticed, there has been a marked increase over the last decade in the number of published manuscripts by such authors, and we are committed to further increasing contributions from China. To that end, the editorial team will be giving presentations in Chinese to improve transparency about the publication process of the CQ. We will also work to increase contributions from scholars across the Global South.

In addition to our efforts designed to widen participation, we are continuing to take the steps necessary to broaden access to the journal. The CQ is the most accessible journal in the field. Since 2022, over 60 per cent of our new content has been available to everyone through “read and publish agreements,” which allow eligible authors to publish Open Access (OA); Cambridge University Press estimates that 75 per cent of CQ authors will be covered by these agreements by 2025. OA can increase engagement and readership in the journal and China studies more generally – particularly in parts of the world that have previously had difficulty accessing material published behind a paywall. This has been evidenced by data which shows that readers in the Global South

make up a significant percentage of users downloading OA content. We are pleased to announce that within the next three years, all articles and research reports published in the journal will be OA at no direct cost to the authors. As such, OA will not just be a feature of the journal, but a policy.

Change is also afoot in China studies. For many Sinologists, the way they do their research has changed significantly, whether it be because of the pandemic, rising financial and climate costs of international travel, or a shifting political landscape. Scholars have embraced a wider array of research methods to collect data amidst these challenges: quantitative analysis of big data, online qualitative interviews and participant observation in social media spaces, to name but a few. We welcome these changes and encourage the submission of research conducted using innovative methods. But we also remain committed to a core principle of the *CQ*, which is to reach the widest possible audience of readers interested in China studies. As such, we expect authors to frame their work, explain their methods and present their analysis in an accessible manner. We believe that cutting-edge research requires broad understandability in order to have the greatest impact.

Beyond the call for methodological diversity in submissions, there is scope for comparative work on relevant themes both within Greater China, the Sinophone world and beyond. Considerable attention has been paid in the last 50-plus years to what makes China special. But what is more broadly generalizable? China's global engagement suggests that a rigorous understanding of how China does – or doesn't – work requires the publication of research that reaches beyond the country's borders while remaining grounded in China studies.

Although this foreword has emphasized aspects of significant change within the journal, there remain important areas of continuity. While there are now two more editors, we will, as always, rely upon the expertise and support of members of the journal's illustrious Editorial Board and its Executive Committee. We intend to maintain the high standard of the journal and ensure that it continues to be the journal of record in China studies. We continue to be proudly multidisciplinary and are open to all work that informs our understanding of contemporary China. And, finally, our readers remain the lifeblood of the journal – we trust that the changes we have implemented will make the *CQ* even more relevant, engaging and informative in the years ahead.

Timothy Hildebrandt, Jieyu Liu and Tim Pringle
The Editors