

## **Editors' Introduction**

What use is Chinese studies in a pandemic? In these extraordinary times, what can our discipline offer to enhance understanding and provide different perspectives, or simply information, as we are trying to manage an unprecedented global crisis? At a moment when hard scientists are back in favour, what can a different type of expert contribute that is of benefit beyond our academic community and of value to enhancing our response here in Britain?

We received an overwhelming response to this call for short papers, from scholars across the globe. We have selected sixteen to be included in this issue. Together, they address the question from a full range of disciplines, including cross-cultural education, classical sinology, law, media studies, linguistics, gender studies, critical cultural studies, art history, political science, diaspora studies, literary studies, economics, international relations, history, and sociology. Each paper makes an important point about the utility of the humanities and interpretive social sciences in a moment of crisis. We emphasise that the views expressed in these papers are the authors' own and do not necessarily represent the position of the journal.

These short papers are a new format for the journal. We will continue to expand the type of contributions we seek to publish while retaining our focus as an academic, peer-reviewed journal. Our section of substantive articles once again not only showcases the breadth of Chinese studies in this country, but also offers food for thought and proves the relevance of our field to the contemporary situation. In the opening article, Tim Barrett invites us to ponder meditation as a method of creative inspiration in the poetry of the Tang period, with the aim of fuelling our contemporary interest in poetry translation in the United Kingdom. What better pursuit in a time when our travels are mostly in the realm of the imaginary!

Ernest Leung and Yan Quan, on their part, analyse China's brief experiment with constitutional democracy and representative government during the early twentieth century. Their account of events shows that the period from 1909 to 1914 provided Chinese society and its elected representatives with important training in modern parliamentary struggle. They identify the rejection of all compromise as a key factor in the failed experiment, but also caution that the worst consequence of a failed experiment with democratisation is the loss of faith in the objective of democratisation itself, as was the case with the Chinese political elite at the time – a loss of faith that continues to hold sway in today's PRC. But of course, we must not forget that in the 1990s the very same KMT achieved the first successful democratic transition in Chinese history through a consensus-based revision of the constitution.

In the third substantive paper of this issue, Astrid Nordin and Graham Mark Smith review, unpack, and question understandings of responsibility in the debates about China. They argue that existing debates all operate with a remarkably similar

understanding of responsibility framed around rules and norms. Whether China adopts existing rules and norms, or whether it establishes rules and norms of its own, responsibility is understood as compliance. Nordin and Smith add to the debate by employing a Derridian approach that is conscious of the irresolvable dilemma when faced with the demands of multiple others. They argue that such an understanding is helpful insofar as it reminds those who would call for responsibility that such responsibility, and politics itself, is more than simply following rules and maintenance of norms.

We close this note with a reminder that we are fully open access, free of charge, double-blind peer reviewed, and offer well-above-average editorial support, especially for early-career researchers. All of the editorial team work in a voluntary capacity. It is a true “labour of love,” which is also the title of a soon-to-be-published Open Access Manifesto, to whose principles and wordings we have contributed and to which we are fully signed up. As humanities and social science scholars, the authors of the manifesto want to reclaim the project of Open Access and key it to a different register of shared creativity and responsibility; we challenge the many enclosures to which we as scholars and knowledge workers in research institutions tacitly consent. We believe that the future of a more accessible, ethical, transparent, and creative form of scholarly communication largely relies on a *labour of love* – unremunerated, off-work time that is freely given as a result of political, emotional, and otherwise idealistic investment in projects that transcend the quest for academic prestige and seek to transform the publishing system from within.

In this spirit, we want to fully acknowledge the generous support given to BJoCS by Tom Marling, our meticulous new copy editor, and by Séagh Kehoe, who joined the journal as guest editor for this issue and whose input in the selection and editing of the position papers was invaluable. Thank you both for your labour of love which made this issue happen.

*Gerda Wielander*