

## Editorial

It has been nearly twenty years since the *Far Eastern Quarterly* was transformed into the *Journal of Asian Studies*. The field of Asian studies itself has been greatly transformed during these two decades. The dimensions of these changes are indicated by two items published in this issue: the 1975 Presidential Address to the Association by Professor Richard Lambert, and an article examining his 1973 *Language and Area Studies Review*. Membership in the Association has increased six- or seven-fold during the last two decades, which fairly reflects the increase in scholarly work on Asia in North America. There are also abundant indicators of the advancing professionalization of the field, such as the common practice nowadays of referring to Asian studies as a "discipline," a term formerly reserved for the fields in which universities generally have departments.

The *JAS* has not changed a great deal during this time. In some respects, its stability is a reflection of the soundness of the principles on which it was constituted and on which it still operates. Some of these principles are worth stating again, with the beginning of Volume 35 and the tenure of a new Editor.

The *Journal of Asian Studies* welcomes for consideration any article-length manuscript in a social scientific or humanistic field. There are no universal criteria of acceptability apart from good, original scholarship and relevance to one or more of the Asian areas included in the Association: China, Inner Asia, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Normally, when a prospective contribution to the *Journal* is received, the Editor—in consultation with an appropriate member of the Advisory Editorial Board—sends it to two qualified referees, specialists in the field covered by the manuscript. Decisions concerning acceptance, revision, or rejection of an article are based upon the reports and recommendations of the referees. The names of authors and referees are not revealed to one another, to keep the review process as impartial as possible. Nevertheless, professional biases and idiosyncratic views sometimes play a part in the review of manuscripts; and referees are occasionally in total disagreement with one another, necessitating a third expert reading of some papers. Because of such factors, and also because of the need to maintain a rough overall balance in the contents of the *Journal*, the Editor must make the final decision concerning each submission. Of course, such decisions can never be arbitrary; they reflect all the judgments, both specialized and general, that have been made about a manuscript.

The first publications of younger scholars have often appeared in the *JAS*, and this should continue to be the case. Articles that offer methodological innovations, comparisons, analysis, reinterpretation of established facts, or challenges to prevailing views have always been welcome here. Editors of the *JAS* have not sought to create an orthodoxy in any field, but rather to seek out areas of ferment and to publish path-breaking views. If we have not always been successful in this, it is not from lack of trying.

These are some of the sound elements of publication policy that have contributed to the scholarly standing of the *JAS*, and they will continue to guide the Editors in the future. However, the conditions under which this policy was established have changed

very greatly since 1948, when they were first announced in the *Far Eastern Quarterly*. The sheer growth in the size of the Asian studies profession means that there are many more scholars actively engaged in research that needs to be published. There are also many more books appearing that deserve to be reviewed in these pages. The *JAS* has increased in size over the last twenty years, but this increase is in no way commensurate with the growth of research in the field—a growth expressed in the present accumulation of manuscripts accepted and awaiting publication. Current costs of publishing, printing, and postage forbid any further expansion in the size of the *Journal*. What should be the editorial policy, given this superabundance of scholarship?

There are some obvious procedural answers to this difficult question. Criteria of acceptability for publication should be tightened, so as to make certain that only the very best papers are accepted. Authors must be urged to reduce the size of their manuscripts to the minimum consonant with full development of their arguments. The Editor must exercise vigilance, so as to use *Journal* pages to the best advantage. These are important considerations and they cannot be taken lightly.

But the *JAS* needs to play a somewhat different role in a profession that has so expanded and diversified in the last twenty years. There is a need for articles that are not simply solid research contributions, but that invite new views of old problems, open up new areas of investigation and new methods of analysis; critical articles that take stock of large areas of enquiry and their issues. There are ideas that can add intellectual leavening to the work of many scholars, across disciplinary and regional-specialty lines. There are papers, or groupings of papers, which—because they draw on information from several regions, or focus on particular intellectual or methodological problems—deserve the attention of a broad range of Asian studies scholars. Given the rapid increase in detailed knowledge, diversified studies, and specialized publications, the *JAS*—with its wide areal and disciplinary scope—is in a unique position to satisfy this need. At the same time, authors offering more specialized work for publication should write with an awareness of the heterogeneity of this journal's readership, and present their material in a form accessible to scholars outside their own particular discipline and area.

The Office of the Editor is a busy place. New manuscripts arrive daily; and the volume of correspondence with authors, members of the Editorial Board, referees, and the press is very large. The editing of manuscripts and the correcting of proofs make year-round demands. This leaves the Editor little leisure in which to survey the field and seek out the seminal articles that will give the *Journal* a special place among all of the publications in Asian studies. By drawing the attention of readers to the greatly increased needs for critical assessment, innovation, and perhaps a measure of intellectual adventure and iconoclasm in these pages, it is hoped that Asianists will aid us by devoting some effort to helping find these articles. We welcome comments from members of the Association on how the *JAS* might better serve their scholarly needs.