

# Putting Information on China in Perspective: *China Information*

TAK-WING NGO

*China Information* is an English-language, non-profit, peer-reviewed academic journal with an international readership. The journal focuses on recent developments in mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other Chinese communities in the fields of economics, politics, law, education, health, environment, literature, and the arts. *China Information* is published by the Documentation and Research Center for Modern China at Leiden University and is now entering its seventeenth year of publication. It is currently listed as one of the "100+ Most Important Journals in Asian Studies" in the Bibliography of Asian Studies Online.

In an attempt to facilitate the communication of new knowledge and stimulation of new ideas, *China Information* pays special attention to views and areas that do not receive sufficient attention in the mainstream discourse concerning contemporary China. In concrete terms, we encourage discussion and debate between different academic traditions, offer a platform to express controversial and dissenting opinions, promote research that is historically sensitive, and extend coverage to the humanities including literature and the arts.

Our mission to promote discussion and debate between different academic traditions is reflected in our awareness of the important contributions made by scholars outside the Anglo-Saxon world. While there is no doubt that pluralism is increasing, the contemporary China field is still very

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TAK-WING NGO is lecturer in Chinese politics at Leiden University, the Netherlands. He is the editor of *China Information* and co-editor of the book series on "Democracy in Asia" published by NIAS Press. His most recent publications include *The Cultural Construction of Politics in Asia* (with Hans Antlöv, 2000) and *Hong Kong's History: State and Society under Colonial Rule* (1999).

much dominated by Anglo-Saxon scholarship. One quick scan of academic book catalogues published in China, Japan, as well as the French-speaking and German-speaking areas immediately reveals how many important works on today's China have escaped the attention of mainstream scholarship. For this reason, *China Information* actively seeks to reflect the diversity of scholarly traditions and research agendas in America, Europe, Japan, and China. The international and transparadigmatic character of *China Information* is not only reflected in the articles we publish but also in the composition of our journal's editorial board, and the fact that we maintain an extensive network of referees from many different areas, academic schools, and disciplines. In addition to our long-standing cooperation with European, American, and Australian research institutes, we have also established contacts with similar institutes in Japan and China with a view to increase the number of contributions from these areas. Our central concern to provide an outlet to scholars outside the Anglo-Saxon world is expressed, among other ways, in the fact that we offer extensive linguistic editing services to contributors who are non-native speakers of English. Furthermore, being aware of the fact that the yardsticks of what constitute a good piece of study may not be the same when judged from different research traditions, we carefully select referees for each manuscript and ensure that each submission receives a balanced assessment—we believe that the review exercise itself can be a valuable academic exchange between scholarly traditions.

In the same vein, *China Information* has expanded its book review section to include coverage of publications from mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, France, and the German-speaking areas. Five book review editors based respectively in Taipei, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Paris, and Vienna have been appointed to commission the review of books written by scholars based in and around the areas in question. Our hope is that bringing those otherwise neglected or ignored research works to the attention of the mainstream scholarship will—in the long run—spearhead the development of a genuinely globalized field of China studies.

Offering a platform to different research traditions will not only enrich our methodology in the study of contemporary China, but will also set

a more balanced research agenda. The explosion of information in the last two decades has stimulated a massive number of studies focusing on China's reform. The complicated and ever changing nature of this reform process has led to a hectic quest to identify the most up-to-date developments and policy consequences—at the expense of historical depth, the search for a more comprehensive understanding of general trends, and reflection on fundamental concepts and categories. To remedy this bias, *China Information* regularly organizes special thematic issues. We have already published the following titles: "Developments in Rural China" (vol. 10, nos. 3/4), "Perspectives on Mao and the Cultural Revolution" (vol. 11, nos. 2/3), "Hong Kong: State and Society under Colonial Rule" (vol. 12, nos. 1/2), "The Body in Contemporary China" (vol. 13, nos. 2/3), and "War or Peace over Taiwan?" (vol. 14, no. 1). These special theme issues are not so much aimed at highlighting a special topic as at stimulating reflection and bringing in different perspectives. Contemporary or historical topics are examined or re-visited from the *longue durée* perspective. By setting research issues against their historical contexts, we hope to promote more in-depth reflection on historical generality and specificity and, in turn, to generate new research agendas and approaches. In response to the success of our theme issues so far, we will step up our effort to continue the existing series.

Another bias in the contemporary China field that *China Information* seeks to remedy is that towards the political, economic, and social sciences. In our view, the current demarcation between the social sciences and the humanities is unwarranted, as social realities are as much reflected in film, literature, drama, and popular art as they are in the realms of politics and economics. In transcending the conventional disciplinary boundaries, we have published numerous articles on the many links between literature and the arts on the one hand, and the social conditions of present-day China on the other. We will continue this policy in an effort to encourage cross-fertilization between disciplines.

*China Information* temporarily changed from a quarterly to a biannual in 2000. Note should be made that vol. 18 (2004) and vol. 19 (2005) will both contain three issues; we will return to our usual quarterly format as of vol. 20 (2006).