Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies

De Giorgi, Schweiger, Hardie, Bizais-Lillig, Klotzbücher, Kraushaar, Smithrosser and Ward. EACS at Fifty: Reflections on Chinese Studies in Europe. *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies*, vol. 7.1 (2026): 1–4.

DOI: 10.25365/jeacs.2026.7.1.de_giorgi_et_al

EDITORIAL

EACS at Fifty: Reflections on Chinese Studies in Europe

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This JEACS special issue marks the European Association for Chinese Studies' fiftieth anniversary. Combining celebration and reflection, it examines the field's evolution, institutional pressures, and academic autonomy.

適逢歐洲漢學學會成立五十周年，本刊特推出專輯，回顧學會發展歷程，梳理歐洲漢學的歷史變遷，並探討學科傳統、課程建設困境以及政治場域對學術自主性的多重影響。

Keywords: scholarly community, post-access era, Cold War Sinology, methodological plurality

關鍵詞：學術共同體，後准入時代，冷戰時期漢學，方法論多元性

The Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies (JEACS) is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by the EACS, www.chinesestudies.eu. ISSN: 2709-9946

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This special issue of the *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* (*JEACS*) commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the European Association for Chinese Studies (EACS). Founded in 1975 and formally established in 1976, EACS has become a central platform for Chinese Studies in Europe, fostering academic exchange across national and disciplinary boundaries and developing into a vibrant scholarly community. Over the decades it has created a network that connects researchers across Europe and beyond, transcending institutional hierarchies and national academic frameworks.

The anniversary conference held in Paris in November 2025 provided an opportunity not only to celebrate this milestone but also to reflect on the changing landscape of Chinese Studies in Europe and the continuing role of the EACS in sustaining scholarly dialogue and cooperation. The contributions assembled in this special issue combine commemoration with critical reflection, addressing the history of the Association, present challenges, and future directions for the field.

The section *EACS at Fifty: Reflections on Chinese Studies in Europe* opens with **Laura De Giorgi** and **Irmy Schweiger's** "Fifty Years of the European Association for Chinese Studies: Reflections on a Scholarly Community and Its Future", which highlights EACS as a space for intellectual exchange, institutional collaboration, and support for younger scholars, while stressing the importance of methodological plurality and international networks. This opening reflection is followed by **Marianne Bastid-Bruguière's** "Reviving a Republic of Letters Among Sinologists in Europe: Kristopher Schipper and Yves Hervouet at Work with Friends and Colleagues to Establish the EACS in the 1970s", which revisits the origins of the Association and situates EACS within a longer genealogy reaching back to the International Conferences of Junior Sinologues (1948–1971). Reconstructing the foundation of EACS in Paris in 1975 and its early institutional development, the article highlights the ambitions of its founders to create a European scholarly network grounded in cooperation, intellectual openness, and a broad humanistic vision of Chinese Studies. It also reflects on the evolution of the Association's identity and recalls the first EACS congress held in Paris in 1976, which laid the foundations for collaborative research initiatives across Europe. In "Why the EACS Matters", **Bart Dessein** situates the Association within broader global transformations since 1975, showing how EACS has continually redefined its mission. Hans van Ess reflects on his own engagement with EACS in "Challenges for Traditional Approaches to Sinology in Challenging Times", advocating for disciplinary traditions and continued scholarly exchange between European and Chinese academic communities despite increasingly difficult conditions. Questions concerning institutional change and disciplinary identity are further explored by **Roel Sterckx** in "Sinology, a Curriculum at a Crossroads? A View from the United Kingdom". Exploring declining enrolments and institutional pressures, he argues for preserving rigorous language-based scholarship and sustainable models of academic training. Offering a different regional perspective, **Mugur Zlotea's** "Chinese Studies in Romania after

the Fall of Communism" examines the evolution of the field in post-1989 Romania, highlighting how political transformations and international networks have shaped its development. The section concludes with **Olga Lomová's** "Sinology between China and Europe: From the Cold War to the New Era". Taking the PRC and the former Czechoslovakia as points of departure, the article examines how changing political conditions have shaped European Sinology—from periods of restricted access and later openness to renewed state influence on research. It further considers recent policies under Xi Jinping and their implications for academic autonomy and international knowledge production on China.

The *Spotlight* section extends these reflections. In "When Access is Conditional: European China Studies in the Post-Access Era", **Stefan Messingschlager** argues that access to China is increasingly governed as conditional and revocable, reshaping research infrastructures and knowledge production itself. **Hilde De Weerdt's** "Where is Chinese History?" examines the institutional and disciplinary positioning of Chinese history in Europe and its implications for teaching and research, as well as the field's visibility and public relevance.

The special issue's *Research Articles* section further illustrates the field's diversity. In "Jan Myrdal's *Report from a Chinese Village*", **Perry Johansson** revisits one of the most influential Western accounts of Maoist China—Jan Myrdal's *Report from a Chinese Village* (1963)—showing how Myrdal's observations were structured and politically orchestrated, shaping Western perceptions of China during the Mao era. **Chen Huaiyu's** "Conversations and Conflicts: The Encounter of PRC Scholars with European Sinologists in the 1950s" explores early Sino-European Cold War encounters by reconstructing the Conferences of Young Sinologues held in Leiden and Paris in the 1950s, highlighting the complex interplay of ideology and scholarly exchange.

Under *Other Research Articles*, **Johanna Krenz's** "Through the Prism and Back: The Poet Daozi and His Holy Ink" discusses the work of contemporary Christian author Daozi (1956–2025), focusing on the interactions between his religiously inspired experimental poetry and ink painting. Using a postsecular approach, she develops the concept of "kenotheotic" writing to describe the intersemiotic dynamics of poem-image pairs, operating on explicit, implicit, and "complicit" levels that include the reader's participation in a shared spiritual experience. **Ivan Alekseev's** "Canon Formation and the Digital Study of Contemporary Chinese Poetry" uses CNKI-data and quantitative methods to examine literary canon formation in contemporary China between 2015 and 2021. The study identifies generational clustering, persistent gender imbalances, and the importance of institutional and commemorative practices in a contemporary poetic canon. In "Gift Exchange and Recognition in Late Ming Literati Culture", **Li Yanran** examines the circulation of paintings, calligraphy, and other cultural artefacts in the network of the Ming literatus Tu Long (1543–1605). The article argues that such exchanges functioned as symbolic capital, enabling the negotiation of status

and recognition while also serving economic needs, thereby revealing the close interrelation of cultural prestige and material survival in late-imperial China.

Issue 7.1 contains no less than five fascinating book reviews:

- **Bart Dessein** *Mencius. A Cure for Chaos.* Adapted and illustrated by C. C. Tsai. Translated by Brian Bruya
- **Nita Handastya** *Chinese Espresso: Contested Race and Convivial Space in Contemporary Italy* by Grazia Ting Deng
- **Chen Lang** *Making Mao's Steelworks: Industrial Manchuria and the Transnational Origins of Chinese Socialism* by Koji Hirata
- **Olga Lomová** *The Poetry of Yuan Haowen: Introduced, Interpreted, Explicated* by John Timothy Wixted
- **Zhang Ning** *State Building in Cold War Asia: Comrades and Competitors on the Sino-Vietnamese Border* by Yin Qingfei

Together, the contributions in this volume demonstrate that Chinese Studies in Europe remains intellectually dynamic while undergoing significant institutional, methodological, and political change. They remind us that the field's vitality depends not only on scholarly excellence, but also on sustaining communities of dialogue across generations, disciplines, and national contexts.

This issue also marks a new addition to the journal's editorial team. We are delighted to welcome **Dr. Julian Ward** from the University of Edinburgh as a new copy-editor of JEACS. We are happy to be working with Julian and benefiting from his expertise in maintaining the journal's editorial standards and continued development.

JEACS continues to welcome proposals for book reviews via jeacsbookreviews@chinesestudies.eu. We ask prospective reviewers kindly to contact us in advance, and we especially encourage reviews of high-quality translations, monographs, and edited volumes published in European languages other than English. We would be grateful for help in sharing this call within relevant scholarly networks.

Finally, we thank all authors, reviewers, editors, and members of the EACS community whose commitment has made both this special issue and fifty years of scholarly exchange possible. We hope this volume not only celebrates the past but also invites continued reflection on the future of Chinese Studies in Europe.

The Editors

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