China at 60: Global-Local Interactions

Chan Lai-Ha • Gerald Chan • Kwan Fung

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China at 60
Global-Local Interactions
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Dedication

For P K and family
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Preface and Acknowledgements

The genesis of this book can be traced back to a casual chat in Cambridge (UK), in 2008 among Kwan Fung, Pak K. Lee, and Gerald Chan. Fung came to Cambridge as a visiting fellow to Clare Hall in the first-half of the year. His former colleague and alumnus at the University of Macau, Pak, who was teaching at the University of Kent, came to visit him. The meeting was joined by Gerald, who had his home in Cambridge but taught at Durham at that time. During a lunch at the University Centre off Mill Lane, they thought that 2009 was an important year, as it would mark the 60th birthday of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Interestingly, the 60 years can roughly be divided into two equal halves, with the first 30 years being marked by a planned economy and politics in command, while the second 30 years being the era of economic reform and opening-up to the world. The year 2009 would also be the year to mark the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Incident. So, the three of them thought that it would be appropriate to do something to mark the year, and an academic conference of some sort might be useful. They cast their minds as to where to hold such a conference, in the U.K., in Hong Kong, or in Singapore, or where the funding would come from.

The answer was difficult to come by, especially when it came to the issue of financial support. They also thought about a potential list of interested contributors. But without funding, and as they were tied up with their respective academic work, nothing much happened, until one day Pak hit upon an idea: since their mutual friend and research collaborator, Chan Lai-Ha, had just finished her doctoral degree at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia, and was newly offered a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), it would be an interesting idea to explore with her whether her affiliation at UTS, the China Research Centre,
would be interested in hosting a conference to mark the PRC at 60. The response from Lai-Ha was quick and positive. She consulted her head, the director of the centre, Louise Edwards. Louise supported the idea enthusiastically and had since then offered staunch support for the endeavour.

Louise and Lai-Ha had a long, constructive discussion as to how to give the conference a distinctive flavour, different from others that were also being organised to discuss the 60th anniversary of the PRC. Louise suggested adding one dimension to the study of China at 60: the global-local nexus. With the twin themes of continuity-and-change and global-local nexus in mind, we started to look for experts in various aspects of China’s development, focusing not only on its experience in the past 60 years but also on its likely trajectory of development in the future, along these two lines of thought. Lai-Ha proposed some potential contributors from UTS and Griffith, while Pak, Fung, and Gerald also made contacts with their mutual friends and colleagues in Hong Kong and Australia. A list of topics and their possible contributors was drawn up and people were approached to join the conference. We received interest and enthusiasm from a number of friends and colleagues who have considerable expertise in their fields. We called for papers through various channels, and the conference began to take shape.

Finally, with the generous financial support from the UTS, the China Research Centre, the conference was held for a full day on 13 July 2009 in Sydney. Contributors flew from Hong Kong, Macao, Auckland, Canterbury (UK) and different parts of Australia (Brisbane, Canberra, and Sydney) to participate in the conference. Lai-Ha was instrumental in organising the logistics in the days and weeks leading up to the conference. Louise was most generous with her support, opened the conference with a warm welcome speech, and dined the participants to a sumptuous dinner at a Chinese restaurant in Sydney’s Chinatown. The UTS Associate Dean of Arts and Social Sciences, Lesley Farrell, came to the morning sessions. Edmund Fung, who taught for a long time at Griffith and now at the University of Western Sydney joined the full-day conference and actively discussed the papers at various points. David Kelly, Feng Chongyi, Anita Chan, and Sun Wanning from UTS acted as Chairpersons of various panels. Claire Moore and Fang Xiaoping graciously provided the most needed logistical support throughout the conference.