

FIFTY YEARS OF *JASO*

With this issue, *JASO* celebrates fifty years since Brian Street and Paul Heelas edited and produced the first issue of the Journal back in 1970. Unfortunately, although it is fifty years since the first issue was published, we cannot actually claim fifty continuous years of production, given the gap between 2000, the year of our last physical print issue, and *JASO*'s revival as a web-only publication, called *JASO* Online or *JASOo*, in 2009. Nonetheless any half-century milestone is a significant one, and our very own Golden Jubilee deserves at least this brief notice.

JASO's origins at this distance of fifty years are now somewhat obscure in terms of whose idea it was, but the journal started as a sub-committee of the Oxford University Anthropological Society, under the auspices of Edwin Ardener, a lecturer in what was then the Institute of Social Anthropology. He was making his name at the time by pioneering critical reflections on Lévi-Straussian structuralism from a perspective which was equally structuralist in its way. The very first article, by Paul Heelas, in asking 'Meaning for whom', queried the ethnographic relevance of classic structuralism and led on to a whole rash of papers and books on what became known as semantic anthropology, though there were other currents as well, such as Marxism and gender. Although Edwin had the title of Editorial Adviser and held the purse strings, a 'senior member' being a requirement of the Proctors' rules for university clubs, he desisted from exercising any editorial control, leaving it to the editors to make the decisions and produce the journal, initially printed on a stencil machine and collated by hand.¹ In the first few years the editors changed frequently, but in 1979 more stability was introduced with the appointment of Jonathan Webber, who introduced a properly printed journal and kept a firm hold on the finances. Steven Seidenberg and Jeremy Coote also became long-term members of the editorial team over this second period, though others were involved more intermittently. I myself joined in 1983 and have been involved ever since. This greater stability of staffing meant that *JASO* eventually ceased to be edited by students, as the post-1979 team all eventually found jobs of one sort or another, though the student-run tradition was maintained to some extent, as it still is, by recruiting students as reviews editors, an area of activity that was relatively easy to demarcate.²

Around 2000, however, for no very obvious reason, we (now without Seidenberg) found ourselves running out of steam and decided to end the Journal's first period of existence, without any idea of reviving it at a later date. Then in 2009 myself and a new editor, David Zeitlyn, at the latter's suggestion, decided to relaunch the Journal as an online venture available as a free download rather than by paid subscription, as formerly. It also involved much less administration and secretarial work than formerly, as well as becoming virtually cost-free, as it no longer had to be printed and dispatched to all the corners of the globe.

JASO is now in the twelfth year of its rebirth. This current issue has the usual mix of articles and reviews, partly written by students, both in Oxford and elsewhere, and partly by post-doctoral, salaried colleagues. (Sadly this issue also includes an obituary of 'Nick' Allen, a longstanding and popular member of the School's staff who died in March this year.) Long may *JASO* continue to provide a forum for publication to those who are starting out on their publishing careers – always one of the justifications for its existence – as much as to those who are already established in the field.

Robert Parkin

¹ For Edwin's own account of *JASO*'s first decade, see Edwin Ardener, 'Ten years of *JASO*: 1970-1980', *JASO* 11/2 (1980), 124-31.

² A full list of the editors and reviews editors involved up to that time can be found on the cover of the last printed issue, Vol. 31 issue 3 (2000).