Editorial

Asian/Americas: Converging Movements

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This scholarly journal is dedicated to the critical examination of visual cultures by and about Asian diasporic communities across the Americas. Distinct from existing periodicals in Asian Studies or Asian American Studies, Asian Diasporic Visual Cultures and the Americas (ADVA) focuses on scholarship at the intersections of Asian Diasporic Studies, Visual Culture Studies and the study of the Americas. Its emphasis is on critiques of visuality in relation to interlocking Asian diasporic studies in Canadian Studies, American Studies, Latin American Studies, Caribbean Studies, and Pacific Island Studies.¹ The journal contests understandings of a singular, imagined Asian diaspora within nation-bound categories or pan-ethnicism; it also refutes ideas of “Asia” as a monolithic construct based on fixed temporalities, geographical proximity, and cultural sameness. The use of the adjective “diasporic” in the journal title is thus intentional. As cultural anthropologist Lok C. D. Siu points out, “the noun ‘diaspora’ often connotes a stable object, a static collectivity with assumed and unchanging sets of identifications and connections,” while use of its adjectival form, “diasporic,”

¹ Visuality is defined here as an authoritarian “regime of visualizations, not images.” For Nicholas Mirzoeff, “if visual culture is for the claiming of a place for those who have no place, (...) it must be against visuality.” “For Critical Visuality Studies,” introduction to The Visual Culture Reader, 3rd edition, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), xxx.
emphasizes “the processual nature of producing diasporic subjectivities.”

Furthermore, the journal seeks to present transnational perspectives on and from North, Central, and South America, as well as the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean, to encourage the hemispheric study of “multiple Americas”—replete with deeply layered and implicated historical to present-day specificities of diverse Indigenous and diasporic populations and identifications.

The journal’s broad conceptualization of the Americas as a complex system of continual movement, migratory flows and cultural transmission, and of the idea of “Asian diasporas” (in the plural) as both an analytical tool and “an intellectual and political project” serves two main purposes. First, it enables a critical interrogation of “the extent to which hemispheric dynamics and processes link the experiences of Asians across the Americas.” A trans-regional Asian Americas perspective underscores how the presence of Asians in the Americas can in fact be traced back to the sixteenth century, with the launching of the Manila-Acapulco galleon global trade system between Europe and Asia that went through Acapulco in Spanish Mexico and the Spanish colonial outpost of Manila in the Philippines. Second, it decentres the term “American” as a default synonym for the US, which stems from an uncritical American exceptionalist framing that continues to obfuscate studies on the dynamic intersections between and within Asian Canadian Studies, Asian American Studies, Asian Latin American Studies, Asian Caribbean Studies, and Pacific Island Studies. This is not to say that there are undoubtedly dominant majority voices, but that the journal’s aims are to support and register marginal or underrepresented positions in ways that recognize the linked constitutive processes as

3 Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Lok C. D. Siu, eds., “Introduction,” Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 2. For Parreñas and Siu, as “a theoretical tool, Asian diasporas should be treated as an open and flexible framework that is inductively formulated and, therefore, always being produced and revised with new research findings” (ibid.).
5 Manila Galleons or China Naos (nao de la China) were the first European ships to establish a regular transpacific trade route across the Pacific Ocean between Asia and the Americas. The Portuguese seaborne empire stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific and across the Indian Ocean, linking Europe to Brazil, Asia, and Africa. At least one ship sailed every year without fail between the Americas and Asia for 250 years, from 1565 to 1815. For a historical background, see Evelyn Hu-DeHart and Kathy López, “Asian Diasporas in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Historical Overview,” Afro-Hispanic Review 27:1 (Spring 2008): 9–21.