

# Introduction: Asian Diasporas— New Conceptions, New Frameworks

Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Lok C. D. Siu

**DIASPORA, TRANSNATIONALISM, AND GLOBALIZATION** have become central issues of our time (Cohen 1997; Kearney 1995; Safran 1991; Sassen 1996; Toloyan 1991). While they are historical processes that reach back more than five hundred years, their reemergence in popular and academic discourse in recent decades addresses the dramatic transformations of the last quarter of the twentieth century—transformations brought about by incredible technological and communication developments; global political and economic shifts characterized by the end of the cold war; the adoption of neoliberal policies and principles of deregulation, privatization, and marketization; and both the increase and extensive reach of global migration. While it is impossible to discuss any one of these terms without referencing the others, it is equally untenable to address all of them at once. This book takes diaspora as its central problematic. Given that much has been written on this concept, it is likely that we hold different understandings of diaspora. We begin, then, with a working definition (which we will further elaborate throughout this chapter). We define *diaspora* as an ongoing and contested process of subject formation embedded in a set of cultural and social relations that are sustained simultaneously with the “homeland” (real or imagined), place of residence, and compatriots or coethnics dispersed elsewhere. More precisely, we view the experience of diaspora as entailing (1) displacement from the homeland under the nexus of an unequal global political and economic system;<sup>1</sup> (2) the simultaneous experience of alienation and the maintenance of affiliation to both the country of residence and the homeland; and finally (3) the sense of collective consciousness and connectivity with other people displaced from

the homeland across the diasporic terrain. Necessary in sustaining these simultaneous relations are everyday practices of sociality, collective memory, economic exchange, and the work of cultural imagination and production, to name a few.

Using Asian diasporas as the organizing framework of this book, we invite the reader to explore with us the linkages, disjunctures, and contradictions among different ethnic groups that claim Asia as their site of dispersal, real or imagined. In doing so, we encourage critical and constructive dialogue about the relevance, usefulness, and pitfalls of using the concept of Asian diasporas. Let us state from the outset that this is not some kind of master narrative we seek to promote but rather an experiment in assessing the intellectual and political potential of such a concept. 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.

Our goal for this book is simple. We want to make an argument for Asian diasporas as an intellectual and political project. Extending current debates on diaspora, we make three interventions. By bringing together a collection of historical and ethnographic studies, we underscore diaspora as human experience, first and foremost, and emphasize the value of examining the relationship between larger social structures and people's everyday lives. While much of the literature on diaspora has been primarily theory focused, this volume offers important insight into how people experience, interpret, and give meaning to diaspora.

Second, we broaden current discussions of Asian diasporas by including mostly new research by emerging scholars and selecting essays that offer a different geographical coverage than is conventionally found in either Asian or Asian American studies. It is not altogether coincidental that while the re-emergence of diaspora studies in the late 1980s has brought Asian and Asian American studies closer together, discussions of diaspora within these two fields have focused primarily on the relationship between Asia and Asian America. To expand our field of vision, we highlight works that explore sites outside the United States. Asian migration, after all, has always been global, and it has become even more so in the past few decades. Our point is to make visible and give voice to communities that, because they fall outside the privileged discourses of and about the United States and Asia and therefore also Asian American and Asian studies, would otherwise be left unacknowledged

or, at best, given only a customary nod. We suggest that the framework of Asian diasporas offers a rare but sorely needed opportunity for communities in marginalized or intersectional areas of study to assert their presence.

Finally, we further disrupt the tendency in Asian and Asian American studies to think of diaspora solely in binary terms of homeland and place of residence. The concept of Asian diasporas we propose entails comparative analysis on two scales concurrently: the place-specific/cross-ethnic (e.g., racialization of Indonesians and Filipinos in Taiwan) and the ethnic-specific/transnational (e.g., racialization of Chinese in Nicaragua and Panama). This two-prong approach will provide us with the means to compare not only the specific conflicts, negotiations, and solidarities that form in different locations but also how they shift and reconfigure when examined through the transnational frame. Asian diasporas facilitate analysis of interlocking relationships that are at once local, national, and transnational. It seeks to explore global connections from different angles.

### Situating Diaspora in Asian American Studies

Diasporas, as phenomena and experience, are centuries old. However, diaspora, as an analytical category of discussion and debate, only gained significance in Asian American studies in the early 1990s. A combination of factors converged at this historical juncture to enable this to happen. To a large extent, demographic shifts in the Asian American population combined with technological advancements and global economic changes made the concept of diaspora particularly meaningful to the study of Asian America. Since the 1965 Immigration Reform Act, the Asian American constituency has shifted steadily from a primarily American-born population to a mostly foreign-born one. The legislation was also class biased, so that aside from those coming into the United States as political refugees or for family reunification, it favored skilled and educated immigration applicants. Intersecting with developments in communication technologies, especially the Internet and all its associated services, these post-1965 immigrants and their descendents were the first group that was truly able to sustain communication on a regular and timely basis with relatives and friends dispersed in Asia and other parts of the world.<sup>2</sup> By the 1990s, this demographic shift in Asian American college- and university-level student bodies had become increasingly apparent, and the area of Asian American studies was confronted with the challenge of making the field relevant to them. Diaspora, which offers a framework to study

relations among the adopted home, the ethnic homeland, and geographically dispersed coethnics, provided a meaningful way to address the experiences of this new student body and population.

The end of the cold war, along with celebratory proclamations of a more interconnected world and increasingly porous national borders, ushered in questions about the established approaches of area studies, which had separated the world into neat, bounded regions (Appadurai 1986; Guyer 2004). Conferences were convened to explore possible new paradigms that would be more appropriate to study this changed world environment<sup>3</sup> (Ford Foundation 1999). These global political and economic shifts, then, were also played out in the academy. The once well-funded area studies were faced with budget cuts. (This was the trend until after September 11, 2001, when government funding once again poured into the study of select world regions.) Faced with changing times, both intellectually and materially, Asian studies were compelled to redefine their research agendas. Meanwhile, the second wave of ethnic studies movements in the 1990s mobilized for the formation of Asian American studies in universities in the Midwest and on the East Coast. In response, many institutions adopted the Asian–Asian American studies model. The study of diaspora and transnationalism served as the theoretical framework that facilitated the coming together of these two previously antagonistic fields of study.

By the mid-1990s, the combination of all these factors led to the predominance of diaspora and transnational approaches in Asian American studies. Of course, Asian American studies were not the only ones affected. Diaspora—along with discussions about the future of the nation-state, the effects and processes of transnationalism, and the porosity of borders and boundaries—became the central concern of the time across the social sciences and humanities disciplines as well as in ethnic studies. And with any paradigm shift, there was also tremendous unease and skepticism.

In Asian American studies, a number of scholars raised critical questions about this theoretical crossroads (Dirlik 1999). However, no one articulates the concerns of the field better than literary scholar Sau-ling Wong. Her 1995 article served as a wake-up call to Asian Americanists about the possible pitfalls of what she has coined the “denationalization” of Asian American studies, or the displacement of the United States as the field’s proper unit of analysis. Pointing to what she saw to be an uncritical shift toward the adoption of the diasporic approach at the expense of the domestic U.S. focus, Wong was concerned about the intellectual and political implications of this shift. At

a time when most scholars willfully adopted the concept of diaspora, Wong asked some halting questions: What would be gained by denationalizing Asian American studies or broadening the scope of analysis beyond the U.S. nation-state? How would adopting a diasporic approach that takes ethnicity as the common denominator affect the U.S.-based, panethnic (i.e., shared racialization) agenda that has long defined Asian American studies?

To a large extent, the project of Asian American studies, both as an area of study and as a social movement, has been defined around the practice of claiming America as home and asserting Asian belonging in the United States. It seeks to build a panethnic coalition based on shared experiences of racialization in the United States. Inarguably, studies of transnational processes and diasporic formations inherently call into question the boundedness of the nation-state, and by extension, they also challenge the United States as the privileged site of analysis. This, of course, strikes at the core of how the field has defined itself. According to Wong, taking a diasporic approach, with its ethnic-specific premise and homeward gaze, actually threatens the panethnic coalition-building spirit of Asian American studies. Taking it one step further, she suggested that the diasporic perspective may lead to the disembodiment of Asian American constituents, diffusing their political potential as a people who claim America as home and whose political commitments should be locally and nationally defined.

As Asian Americanists, we are very much invested in the coalition-building project of the field and therefore also mindful of Wong's incisive cautionary insights. At the same time, our disciplinary training in anthropology (Siu) and sociology (Parreñas) cultivated our particular understanding of diaspora, which is ethnographically grounded and historically informed. Moreover, both of us were greatly influenced by British cultural studies approaches, which emphasized diaspora as a political positioning and identification (Hall 1990) as well as a process of constructing links based on shared history and experience among geographically dispersed diasporic communities (Gilroy 1987, 1993). Similarly, we were informed by political economic approaches that emphasized the structural and material effects compelling migrations as well as by ethnographic approaches that focused on people's everyday lives and interpretations. As we pursued our own research projects that centrally engaged the framework of diaspora and that, in fact, were made possible by the growing interest in this approach, we came to a different conclusion than Wong about the limitations and potentials of diaspora studies. What led to

our divergent conclusions, we suggest, is our understanding of what diasporic analysis entails and what it can bring to Asian American studies.

Within Asian American studies, diaspora has been used primarily to refer to ties and relationships between Asians in the United States and their respective ethnic homelands in Asia. Diaspora research in this field, therefore, has focused on this binary relationship between homeland and place of settlement. As mentioned above, this focus on Asia–Asian American relations emerged at a time when the disciplinary borders between Asian and Asian American studies were becoming more porous (see, for instance, Chuh and Shimakawa 2001). Diaspora provided an intellectual framework that both facilitated and legitimated their coming together as one institutional program or department. Given the history of antagonism between the two fields—one founded by cold war imperatives and the other by student activism—not only was their institutional relationship fraught with ideological tension and looked upon with suspicion but (for many) so was the concept that facilitated their merging. The entry of diaspora approaches into Asian American studies, then, was quite contested.

To date, the emphasis on homeland–Asian American ties still dominate discourses of diaspora in Asian American studies. This certainly keeps our field of vision narrowly focused on ethnic ties between two locations, Asia and the United States. We wish to expand that field of vision by proposing Asian diasporas as a research agenda that encourages not only ethnic-specific studies of ties between the homeland and place of settlement and ties among geographically dispersed communities but also comparative analysis of different ethnic diasporas, both in terms of their two sets of ties and in terms of their interaction with one another in specific locations. This involves both ethnic-specific / geographically dispersed and place-specific / comparative ethnic research. Moreover, it does not restrict investigation among ethnic Asians but also between Asians and other racial groups, including blacks, Latinos, and indigenous peoples. What the study of Asian diasporas aspires to do is articulate an intellectual and political agenda that makes possible the forging of not only locally and nationally based alliances but also translocal and transnational coalitions across the globe. Doing so, we emphasize, does not mean the elision of tensions, inequalities, and conflicts but rather the confrontation of those issues with the goal of achieving social equality.

We suggest that the framework of Asian diasporas, as we define it, does not necessarily threaten or contradict the coalitional spirit of Asian American studies. We argue, instead, that it helps extend it. The study of Asian diasporas,

we suggest, offers a synthetic approach that brings together the important lessons learned from the nation-based, panethnic framework and the potential links offered by the diaspora approach. To a certain degree, our proposal to join these two approaches is not completely new. In fact, the Asian American studies movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s framed the institutionalization of Asian American studies as an effort toward self-determination that rejected both American colonialism in Asia and internal colonialism of Asian Americans in the United States. It articulated a transnational politics that underscored their interconnected experience of racialization, exploitation, and colonial violence. It is in this same spirit of seeking dialogue and mutual exploration and understanding that this volume is created. Without overdefining the term and thereby restricting its flexibility as a theoretical tool, this chapter, and more generally this book, provides a working definition of what we mean by Asian diasporas.

### Defining Asian Diasporas

In proposing the concept of Asian diasporas, we recognize that not all Asian migrations are diasporic in nature; we do not presume that all Asians living outside of their so-called homelands have a diasporic sensibility, take a diasporic position, or assume a diasporic identity. For instance, some migrants—people who physically relocated from one area to another regardless of their settlement—are better described not as diasporic but as transnational because they maintain relations only to the home and host societies and do not share a connection or history with compatriots living in other locales<sup>4</sup> (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994). Others may choose to adopt a singular national identity and reject the double consciousness or dual identification inherent in diasporic living (Gilroy 1993). As such, we do not claim the formation of an all-encompassing or singular Asian diaspora that is universal in scope and relevance to Asian migratory experiences. To do so would be to deny the multiplicity of experience and to make meaningless the very category we seek to define. In other words, we are *not* proposing a panethnic Asian diaspora but rather insist on referring to Asian diasporas in the plural. This is to underscore the multiple and varied formations of Asian diasporas as well as the fragmentation of ethnicity, gender, race, nation, sexuality, and class in and across diasporas.<sup>5</sup> Hence, diasporic connections do not universally include the entire globe but instead are composed of fragmented, multiple connections that emerge from historically specific conditions.

Consequently, our discussion of diasporas does not disregard the ethnic differences and conflicts that mar relations in Asia. We are deeply aware of the unequal relations within and between nation-states as well as the historical and contemporary conflicts in this region. We therefore avoid constructing Asia as a homogeneous homeland. (Wong 1995). In fact, given the active manner in which some Asian states pursue their respective diasporas, as with the cases of Taiwan, Japan, Korea, India, and the Philippines, it is impossible to imagine Asia as existing as a singular homogenized continental homeland for all Asians. In promoting diasporic identifications, each state reconstructs its own distinct historical narrative and uses culturally specific discourses and practices to arouse and bolster sentiments of ethnic belonging and loyalty. For instance, and as illustrated in essays in this volume, the Philippines bolsters the masculinity of Filipino men to promote the global dispersion of its seafarers (Chapter 2); Korea has begun to embrace its once rejected crop of Korean adoptees as their own children (Chapter 7); and Japan assumes an essential notion of culture when limiting its low-wage migrant workforce to coethnic Nikkei-jin (Chapter 9).

Indeed, the last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed an intensification of efforts by certain Asian homeland states to reach out to their diasporas for political, economic, and labor support. For instance, while mainland China has called upon its diaspora for economic contributions to strengthen the Chinese nation (Louie 2004), Taiwan has reached out for political support in its efforts to establish sovereignty (Siu 2005a, 2005b). Meanwhile, India has instituted the Non-Resident Indian status to encourage diasporic economic investment in India, and Japan has recruited its diaspora in Latin America for labor resources (Lesser 2003; Linger 2001; Raj 2003; Roth 2002; Shukla 2003; Tsuda 2003). The active role of Asian states in producing and sustaining diasporic connections and identifications with their respective homelands is perhaps the single most important factor that distinguishes Asian diasporas from most other diasporas (Israel being a notable exception).

Despite our epistemological construction of Asian diasporas, we also recognize the danger of reiterating Asia as a singular unit bounded by conventions of geographical proximity and cultural-racial sameness. Indeed, we are profoundly aware of the internal differences, antagonisms, and hierarchies that exist within Asia. Yet, without ignoring them, we understand Asia to be a homogenizing category that is historically produced through a set of discourses and imaginaries and whose parameters have been drawn and redrawn by the shifting agendas of various intellectual and political projects (Said



1978). While there is no singular or uncontested version of what Asia represents, the dominant perception of Asia still evokes a set of orientalized images and concerns. We cannot deny the legibility of Asia as a recognizable geographical region and “Asianness” as the cultural component in both popular imagination and academic discourse. Moreover, the conflation of place, culture, and race continues to persist: even as people move from Asia, they cannot be disassociated from being Asian. Asian diasporas, hence, call attention to the racializing-gendering process involved in diaspora making. As much as Asia has been constructed as a distinct “oriental other” against which the neoliberal West has defined itself (Chuh and Shimakawa 2001), we insist that *Asia* also serves as a powerful term of identification against the West. Hence, our intention in using Asian diasporas as the organizing framework is strategic. While the word *Asian* in Asian diasporas forces us to think critically about the racializing-gendering processes involved in diaspora making, *diasporas*—in its plural form—insist that we examine the links and disjunctures within and between this assemblage of collectivities. What we want to accomplish in this volume, then, is to facilitate two sets of comparative analysis at once: the place-specific, cross-ethnic study of how racializing-gendering processes affect different diasporic groups in one location, and the transnational relations and interactions among the geographically dispersed communities of each diaspora. Taking this dual approach moves us beyond the denationalization debate that situates the national in opposition to the diasporic. This volume seeks to formulate a new politics that is informed by transnational connections while recognizing the specific disciplinary regimes of local-national emplacement.

While it is important to examine the constantly shifting discursive formation of Asia in relation to the West, it is not enough to stop there. To fully grasp the production of Asian diasporas, we also emphasize the uneven political and economic relations that have formed between Asia and the West, as well as within Asia, and discuss their implications in facilitating Asian emigration as well as in shaping the conditions of their displacement. Again, we understand Asia to be tremendously diverse, embodying different cultural histories and political economic realities. What we want to emphasize is that as much as Asia, as imagined construct, has occupied a critical place in the West, so too has Asia as political and economic territory.

A quick glance at the colonial history of Asia will show its significance as prized territory of numerous resources. It is worth reminding that, almost all territories in Asia<sup>6</sup> have been subjected to various forms and degrees of

Western colonialism, and in fact some places have been colonized more than once. The British, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Americans all had colonized different parts of Asia, extracting natural resources and facilitating labor migrations from the region. As illustrated in Evelyn Hu-DeHart's (Chapter 1) seminal piece on the history of Chinese labor migration to Latin America, European colonialism was the main medium through which migrations, indentured and otherwise, dispersed from Asia to elsewhere in the world. Some went as indentured laborers to other colonized territories: hundreds of thousands of Chinese laborers were taken to Cuba and Peru in the late nineteenth century, and the same was true for Indians sent to Trinidad, Guyana, and Surinam. For the most part, despite the end of formal colonialism, the unequal relations between Asia and the West prevail, albeit with some exceptions and appearing in different forms and guises. These relations continue to be reflected in contemporary Asian migrations. An aim of this volume is to examine the historical threads and divergences between the earlier migrations of the nineteenth century with those of the twentieth century. What are the specific political and economic conditions that frame these different migrations? And what are the cultural and social factors that compel and enable the production of diasporic identifications? The essays in this volume offer multiple answers to these questions while illustrating the diasporic processes shared by Asian migrant groups across time and space. They also illustrate the dialectic relationship between structures that frame diasporas and the efforts of diasporic subjects to construct ties to more than one place and culture.

In studying diasporic processes rather than treating diaspora as a stable object, this volume seeks to establish bases of cross-national and cross-ethnic alliances for marginalized migrants. While it may be true that Asian diasporas emphasize ethnic-specific identifications, it does not preclude other forms of identification. Contrary to the idea that the transnational ethnic-specific focus of diaspora loses sight of cross-racial politics (Wong 1995), we insist there is nothing inherent in diasporic identifications that prevents the formation of broader political alliances. It does not have to be one or the other, but both forms of collective identification can coexist. In fact, we suggest that diasporic consciousness and identifications emerge and grow stronger from local processes of racialization, be it in the form of exclusion or affirmation. It is a strategy of resistance, though we recognize that it may not always have a progressive agenda. Recognizing diaspora as resistance offers a basis for examining larger structures of domination at work. Herein lies the potential for

mobilizing cross-ethnic and cross-racial political alliance. Like other forms of identity—be it racial, gender, or national—diasporic identity “comes out of very specific historical formations, out of very specific histories and cultural repertoires of enunciation, that it can constitute a ‘positionality’” (Stuart Hall 1996: 502). Using diaspora as a means of investigating these histories comparatively offers the possibility of articulating a larger collective positioning and politics.

Lastly, we insist on the epistemology of Asian diasporas in order to situate various diasporic formations in the world system that ties nations in a relationship of unequal dependency, especially in relation to the West. The notion of Asian diasporas underscores the global and engenders the development of a multinational collective politics of Asianness that accordingly acknowledges inequalities between nation-states. Moreover, reminiscent of Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal’s (1991) idea of scattered hegemonies, this concept underscores the shared displacement of migrant exclusion that various Asian migrants encounter in different local contexts across varying locations. In other words, we use the rubric of diaspora to emphasize the similar experiences of exclusion in multiple domestic contexts across nations. To give a few examples, the psychic injuries of displacement from the homeland described by Tobias Hübinette (Chapter 7) of Korean adoptees resonates, for instance, with Sharmila Sen’s (Chapter 6) want for a cultural authenticity long lost by the transformations forced by geographical displacement. Similarly, experiences of national exclusion are shared but operate differently, for instance, socioeconomically or culturally. While Takeyuki Tsuda (Chapter 9) speaks about the double displacement of being cultural outsiders experienced by Japanese Brazilians in Japan and Brazil, national exclusion is illustrated socioeconomically by Pei Chia Lan (Chapter 10). Specifically, she illustrates how the exclusion of provisional migrants in Taiwan minimizes their wages and labor bargaining power. In so doing, she demonstrates how the operation of global capitalism depends on the erection of borders. Nationalism is at the heart of diasporic displacements. As such, our reference to diaspora is not a mere acknowledgment of the transnational forces that shape race relations but instead include the local manifestations of social inequalities such as racism and xenophobia.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, our project distinguishes those Asians who can move, especially to the West, from Asians who are left immobile by the forces of global capitalism and those who choose not to move because of their privileged access to global capitalism. Hence, we do not wish to establish the

sameness in experiences of Asians in relation to global capitalism and instead maintain the distinction between those Asians located in Asia to Asians in the West.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Making of Diasporas*

Being diasporic is “to know [one’s homeland and place of residence] intimately, but [neither be] wholly of either place” (Hall 1996: 490). It is this process of continual displacement that serves as our springboard to categorically situate Asian migrations under the rubric of diasporas. Our point of comparison, hence, does not begin with a search for diasporic “origins.” Being diasporic is not a static, monolithic identity, nor does it denote an unchanging past or some kind of preserved ethnicity or primordial essence that needs to be rediscovered or untapped. This perspective assumes that diasporas exist in a vacuum removed from external forces and protected from social, economic, and cultural transformations. In our view, being diasporic requires continual reproduction of certain conditions and identifications. The essays in the volume illustrate this process well from the turn to Vietnam for brides by diasporic Vietnamese men confronting the rise in nontraditional dual wage-earning households in the West to the use of religious rituals from the homeland by economically subjugated Hindi and Muslims in Trinidad and Tobago. In going home, however, diasporic subjects do not excavate an authentic ethnic self but instead reproduce cultures in inevitably altered forms.

Our approach to understanding Asian diasporas, then, is to focus on the *making* of diasporas and the *experience* of diasporization. Thus, essays in this volume highlight the multiple forms of displacement that cause diasporization, including political economic inequities in the globe, social inequalities in multiple host and origin societies, and cultural barriers that impede belonging to the place diasporic Asians inhabit and the place they call homeland. These processes of marginalization are the underlying threads that tie the multiple diasporic communities we present in this volume.

Hence, we establish the triadic relationship that captures the essence of diasporic experiences by illustrating the efforts of diasporic subjects to reproduce their connections to more than one place and culture in the context of various systems and forces of local and global inequalities. In other words, this volume explicitly addresses both the marginalizing factors as well as the liberating aspects of diaspora as it illustrates the making of diasporas in the actions of subjects. Rather than treating diaspora merely as a form of identifi-

cation, this volume also draws out the sociopolitical and material conditions that produce, sustain, and perpetuate diasporic formations. For instance, we stress that the diasporic condition is produced by the partial belonging of subjects to both their place of residence and the homeland, and more specifically by the displacement caused by their placement outside the logic of the racially and culturally homogenous and territorially bounded nation-state.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, we view diaspora as much more than a cultural identity; rather, it is as is racism a condition of living in displacement. It is as much an embodied experience as it is a way of understanding one's personhood.

In the past two decades, diaspora has served as a liberatory concept to refute one's subordinate status as "ethnic minority" and second-class citizen in the host nation (Ang 2001; Gilroy 1987). To be part of a diaspora is to reference one's relationship and belonging to some larger historical cultural-political formation—a people, a culture, a civilization—that transgresses national borders. It is a way of reformulating one's minoritized position by asserting one's full belonging elsewhere. It seeks to redefine the terms of belonging. In focusing on its liberating potential, however, scholars of diaspora have often deemphasized the negative and confining aspects of diasporic identification. This volume offers a corrective to this tendency and insists on examining the marginalizing forces that work to produce and sustain diasporic formations. As described earlier, racism and xenophobia are two such marginalizing forces that impede the full belonging of diasporic groups not only in their place of settlement but also in their place of origin. This is, for instance, illustrated in Tsuda's vivid illustration of the cultural in-between space inhabited by Japanese Brazilians. They neither fully belong in Japan nor in Brazil. Similarly, Korean political leaders during the Japanese occupation experienced a similar double displacement from *place*. As Richard Kim (Chapter 8) illustrates, they were displaced from political participation and representation not only in the homeland but also from host societies that only recognized the government of the occupying force of Japan. Such displacements tell us that being diasporic is not always a matter of choice.

Consequently, we emphasize the exclusionary practices that confront migrants upon settlement and the alternative forms of belonging and community that they inspire. Sociologist Yasmin Soysal fears that the reduction of migrant identity to "ethnic arrangements, transactions, and belongings" in diaspora could disregard the affiliation of migrants to the host society (2000: 13). Not in disagreement with Soysal, we believe that migrants *always*

experience a process of acculturation and belonging to their host societies. However, acculturation does not necessarily occur in opposition to diasporization. Ien Ang similarly notes, “Migrants always inevitably undergo a process of cross-cultural translation when they move from one place to another, from one regime of language and culture to another . . . But the process of cultural translation is not a straightforward and teleological one: from the ‘old’ to the ‘new’” (2001: 4). The routine of everyday life and daily interactions propel the hybrid, syncretic, and uneven formation of migrant cultures and identities that mixes old and new. Our approach to Asian diasporas, then, is not concerned with excavating the old or reconstructing diasporic subjects’ one-sided relationship with the homeland. Instead, we are interested in how shifting configurations of power and resistance in the local impel and enable alternative imaginaries and practices of belonging in displacement.

Thus, we consider how strained relations with the host society could engender diasporic consciousness. For instance, the underclass may reclaim their loss status via return migration, while those integrated to ethnic economies could potentially maximize capitalist accumulation by acquiring multiple passports, and likewise those who assimilate into the dominant spaces of the middle class may increase their cultural cache by leading a cosmopolitan lifestyle that cannot exist without their contacts within the diaspora.<sup>10</sup> We do not view diasporas and immigration to be mutually exclusive categories of settlement, but instead note that similar to the transmigrants, migrants with the resources to do so are those who may opt to lead more diasporic lives so as to smoothen their process of “assimilation” or more accurately integration—whether permanent or temporary—in their particular host society. Thus, we insist on the conceptualization of Asian diasporas to underscore not only the marginal inclusion experienced by Asian migrants in various local contexts but also the way they utilize diasporas to resist their experience of marginal inclusion. At the same time, and as noted earlier, we recognize the subaltern who is without resources to cross or align across borders. We therefore give emphasis to the resources that enable diasporic subjects to cross borders.

### *Diasporic Condition in Relation to Home*

Essays in this volume illustrate the ongoing social relations, memories and imaginaries, and cultural production of diasporic Asians that construct multiple links to places, cultures, and communities. In so doing, they bring out the tensions that underlie notions of home in diasporas. Indeed, the question