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Blog

NATSA 2019 Annual Conference at The University of Washington at Seattle (May 16-18, 2019)

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Theme: Destabilizing Empires from the Margin: Taiwan Studies in Reflection

Date: May 16-18, 2019

Venue: The University of Washington, Seattle, USA

Conference programme:

<https://www.na-tsa.org/2018-conference-schedule> (<https://www.na-tsa.org/2018-conference-schedule>).

Local Sponsor: Taiwan Studies Program, The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies

Main Theme

From a historical-geopolitical perspective, Taiwan has been on the frontier of competing empires and great powers. In the past century, Taiwan has transformed from a remote island of the Qing dynasty, the focal point of the Japanese empire's Southbound strategy, the "economic miracle" arising from the Cold War geopolitical economy, to a point of leverage in the current

re-emergence of US-China confrontation. These contexts have shaped not only the political-economic reality of Taiwan but also the way in which Taiwan develops its knowledge of theory and practice.

This year, the 25th annual NATSA conference aims to investigate Taiwan and its knowledge production from the position of the margin. This conference not only proposes critical evaluation of the forces that have been shaping Taiwan Studies from multiple disciplines but also aims to expound on the value that Taiwan Studies has contributed to academia globally, the potential of connecting other sites of knowledge production, and the challenges that may be faced.

The period of Japanese rule and the Cold War, along with its aftermath, are not just chronological time periods, but epistemological frameworks that link the past to the present and reposition Taiwan in the world. Having endured different regimes, encountering multiple empires, and embodying their respective knowledge and power practices, Taiwan has become a dynamic margin in time and space, resonating with some of the dominant hegemonic cultures, ideologies and material practices yet at the same time negotiating, resisting and transforming them. In the wake of democratization, Taiwan is currently experiencing a demand for the political and cultural past, the national pursuit of reconciliation, demand for recounting its colonized past, an attempt to combat the entrenchment of neoliberalism, and a growing social demand for gender equality, human rights, dignity, and a sustainable society. In this light, intellectual engagement with Taiwan requires critical examination of the entanglement of racial, ethnic and nationalist politics. For example, the unique development of sex/gender awareness and LGBTQ movements in Taiwanese society has been shaped from the intersection between domestic social change and its geopolitical positions; education and curriculum design as sites for prolonged ideological struggles, as well as the multiple projects for decolonization and transitional justice. These struggles are embedded both in history and in the changing dynamics of the global political economy where new hegemonic structures are in the making.

These dynamics are by no means exclusive to Taiwan, and can only be comprehended in relation to the multiple empires and in comparison with other margins and semi-peripheries. Specifically, located in East Asia – one of the most salient areas that envisages the complexity, tension, and paradox of the post-War global political economy – Taiwan Studies seeks to shed light on the power dynamics that have contributed to the similarities and differences in the lived experiences of Pacific Asia regarding knowledge production throughout the past century.

As such, the conference invites scholars to rethink the theoretical meaning of Taiwan Studies in the present-day through a recalibration utilizing multiple epistemological frameworks. We invite potential applicants to share their insights and to make organic linkages with the proposed agenda. Critical thinking across, and beyond, national borders are particularly welcomed. The 25th annual NATSA conference aims to open up a floor for an open, yet in-depth, theoretical discussion and reflection on the establishment and practices of Taiwan Studies in academia globally, and would continue to propose Taiwan as a theoretical focal point to problematize global issues through exploring unique, yet connected, experiences in the world.

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