Inaugural Introduction

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The founding of *Nature and Culture* comes at a time when pro-environmental attitudes in the world are still high, but the discourse on ecological issues has been eclipsed mostly by issues of security, terrorism, and economic growth. This trend might also be because the debates on ecological issues to date are mostly based on natural scientific evaluations and findings on the state of the natural environment. What is lacking is more input from the humanities, social sciences, and historical sciences so that this dialogue can be interdisciplinary, and even transdisciplinary in nature. To foster such a dialogue, *Nature and Culture* is intended to be a unique forum for the international community of scholars and practitioners to present, discuss, and evaluate critically issues and themes related to the historical and contemporary relationships that societies, civilizations, empires, regions, and nation-states have with nature. Its pages welcome authors working in areas related to this overall thematic, and especially those who are working on the *frontiers* of understanding and explaining this historical/contemporary nature/culture relationship, regardless of discipline. Our object is to produce a journal serving those scholars and practitioners whose theoretical orientations extend beyond disciplinary boundaries, and who are moving beyond specific specializations toward broader syntheses with intentions to participate in intellectual and practical discussions on our ecosystem's past trends and future prospects.

The journal is intended to provide a "liberated zone" in which interdisciplinary work attempting to understand and explain nature-culture relations can have an environment for debate and consideration. The effort is to have a serious interpolation of theory, methodology, criticism, and concrete observation forming the basis of the discussion. The journal will furthermore offer a forum for the identification of knowledge gaps in our understanding of the Nature-Culture relationship. In terms of time duration, the Journal's coverage will range from prehistory to contemporary times, and in a structural sense, from *conjonctures* to *la longue durée*. Scope of geospatial coverage will encompass communities and life-places to the global context. Beyond this invitation, a

special welcome is extended to less established frameworks and scholarship dealing with nature-culture relations that most often do not find a place in the current debate and discussion on contemporary ecological issues or what has occurred in the past. These intellectual resources will not be treated as ends in themselves. Rather, it is the intention of the journal to encourage their development as means for understanding the complexities of nature-culture relations in historical and contemporary perspectives. Thus, our efforts will be exploratory in considering the newer ideas and frameworks with the aim of developing these resources. They will be evaluated on what they propose (their theoretical frameworks), instead of just debating the findings from which they have been utilized. On an overall basis, the intention therefore is to provide a forum that moves beyond specialized enclaves and mindsets toward broader syntheses that encompass time, space, and structures in understanding nature-culture relations.

The risk of slighting theoretical frameworks comes with an attempt to identify specific concerns that the journal wishes to focus on in terms of its coverage. Rather than having a journal that has a wide spectrum of coverage, the journal will be more deliberate in identifying issues and concerns that in the view of the editors and editorial board address the ecological contingencies and challenges that human communities face in the past, and during the contemporary period. To this end, the journal will dedicate special issues to specific thematic discussions. These issues will consist of submitted refereed papers, and if necessary, solicited contributions to round off the debate and discussion. It is hoped that this latter initiative will sharpen the Journal's contribution to the current debate of contemporary ecological issues and provoke a rethinking of accepted viewpoints and conceptions on how ecological and social problems of the past and the present have been explained. A set of topics indicative of our concerns and suggestive of the kinds of papers and themes that the journal will address in the initial period are as follows:

- i) Cultural Reactions and Conceptions of Nature;
- ii) Degradation and Restoration of the Environment;
- iii) Ecological Time and Ecological Futures.

The editors and the editorial advisory board are aware that the above topics might be too confining, and that we ourselves, in response to changing ecological conditions and debates should not be restricted by them, for human brilliance is always welcome whatever its ecological topic.