


BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

A Transpacific Renaissance: New Perspectives in Cultural and Social Studies

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This essay reviews the following works:

Cultural and Literary Dialogues Between Asia and Latin America. Edited by Axel Gasquet and Gorica Majstorovic. Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. Pp. xiii + 274. \$54.99 paperback. ISBN: 9783030525705.

The Japanese Empire and Latin America. Edited by Pedro Iacobelli and Sidney Xu Lu. Honolulu: Honolulu University Press, 2023. Pp. 310. \$24.99 Kindle. ISBN: 9780824892999.

East Asia, Latin America, and the Decolonization of Transpacific Studies. Edited by Chiara Olivieri y Jordi Serrano-Muñoz. Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. Pp. xvii + 274. \$54.99 paperback. ISBN: 9783030745271.

Peligro amarillo: La sombra de Japón durante la Revolución Mexicana. By Victor Kerber Palma. Mexico City: Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2021. Pp. 396. MXN \$400 paperback. ISBN: 9786074461695.

Race and Migration in the Transpacific. Edited by Yasuko Takezawa and Akio Tanabe. New York: Routledge, 2022. Pp. xiv + 265. \$29.59 paper, \$128.00 hardcover. ISBN: 1032 210206.

The Migration of Chinese Women to Mexico City. Ximena Alba Villalever. Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. Pp. xv + 172. \$129.99 paperback. ISBN: 9783030924218.

From the pioneering 1991 work of Julia A. Kushigian, *Orientalism in the Hispanic Literary Tradition*, the literary and cultural studies that analyzed transpacific productions have privileged Orientalist approaches,¹ highlighting questions of representation and

¹ The term *Orientalist approaches* in this context refers to scholarly works that have drawn on the ideas of the Palestinian American scholar Edward Said, particularly as presented in his book *Orientalism* (1978), and applied them to specific Latin American settings. A common thread in these adaptations is the argument that Latin American authors' depictions of Asian nations have been influenced by European authors with Orientalist tendencies, many of whom are scrutinized in Said's work. It is suggested that such portrayals reiterate European-produced stereotypes about Asia, thereby constituting a sort of "second-order" Orientalism. For scholarship on Orientalism in cultural and literary studies, see Araceli Tinajero, *Orientalismo en el modernismo hispanoamericano* (Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures, 2003), and *Orientalisms of the Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian World* (Escribana Books, 2014); Ignacio López-Calvo, *Alternative Orientalisms in Latin America and Beyond* (Cambridge Scholars

exoticization deriving from European and North American theoretical frameworks. Over the past decade, a new generation of transpacific scholars has articulated transdisciplinary perspectives on transpacific history, highlighting the local and international contexts that have framed cultural exchanges. The book series *Historical and Cultural Interconnections between Latin America and Asia*, organized by Ignacio López-Calvo and Kathleen López, has played a crucial role in shaping the new directions that scholars from transpacific studies are exploring. Since 2020, this series has published eleven books, marking significant and exciting growth in the field. The series explores the rich and comprehensive history of interactions between Latin America and Asia via the Pacific, dating back to the establishment of the Manila galleon trade route in 1565. These interactions offer compelling opportunities to examine global phenomena such as racialization processes, the expansion of imperialist policies, and migration flows, among others. The multidimensional nature of these exchanges, which encompasses cultural, political, and trade elements, presents an engrossing area of study that has captured the attention of scholars on social sciences and cultural studies. Over the past three decades, several multidisciplinary researchers have attempted to map the transpacific flows between these two regions.

There has been a notable reevaluation of the methodological, theoretical, and critical frameworks in transpacific scholarship in recent years, leading to a shift in the conceptualization of research projects. This shift is reflected in the growing number of edited books that explore cultural, social, and political exchanges between Latin America and the broader Asian continent. However, transpacific scholarship faces an ongoing methodological challenge in analyzing works from geographically diverse regions with significant differences in cultures, languages, and political systems, spanning exchanges between East Asia, India, and the Middle East in the same textual spaces. Editorial decisions in such works often create discontinuities in debates between researchers, highlighting the limitation of transpacific studies to a few specialists per geographical region. This sometimes results in compilations that lack meaningful comparison across different geographies.

The latest generation of transpacific scholarship has tried to remedy this problem. Edited books now prioritize a theoretical or geographical core, expanding dialogues and discussions across chapters. An example of this shift can be observed in the current research regarding exchanges with Japan. The recognition of Japanese imperialism after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 among scholars of all disciplines—which led to rapid industrialization, expansionist policies, and the deployment of migration policies to establish settler colonialism throughout the Pacific Rim—has fundamentally transformed the understanding of cultural and political relations with Latin America. For example, recent studies have examined the massive migration waves to countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Peru. Japanese imperial authorities organized and financed these migrations from 1889 to 1945. This historiographical shift involved analysis of the specific contexts of Japan and Latin American countries and stressed the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches in transpacific scholarship.²

In the context of this transpacific renaissance, the six books reviewed here offer new insights and suggest new directions for the field. Four of them are edited books that compile studies of different geographies, times, and theoretical approaches to studying

Publishing, 2007); Axel Gasquet, *L'Orient au Sud: L'orientalisme littéraire argentin d'Esteban Etcheverría à Roberto Arlt* (Pu Clermont, 2010); *Llamado de Oriente: Historia cultural del orientalismo argentino (1900–1950)* (Eudeba, 2015).

² For academic production regarding the Japanese imperialist expansion in Latin America, see Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Toake Endoh, *Exporting Japan. Politics of Emigration to Latin America* (University of Illinois Press, 2009); Sidney Xu Lu, *The Making of Japanese Settler Colonialism* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

cultural productions or social and historical phenomena, mapping general discussions on transpacific studies. The other two books are monographs that explore transpacific encounters among Mexico, Japan, and China.

Cultural and Literary Dialogues Between Asia and Latin America, edited by Axel Gasquet and Gorica Majstorovic, features diverse veteran and emerging scholars. The book marks a pivotal moment in the growing field of transpacific studies. It comprises fourteen chapters grouped into four parts: “Asian Hybrid Identities and Latin American Transnational Narratives,” “Reception and Translations of Latin American Writers in Asia,” “Diffraction Worlds of Nikkei Identities,” and “Crossroads of Asia-Latin American Narratives and Travel Writing.” Although the book encompasses research from various contexts, such as India, the Philippines, Palestine, Korea, and China, it effectively organizes them into subsections with shared thematic or geographic focuses, even though some chapters are considerably shorter than others. The introduction by Gasquet and Majstorovic provides a comprehensive overview of current debates in transpacific studies. In historical terms, the introduction highlights the most significant transformations in cultural exchanges, from the initial Spanish colonial encounter to the migration of Chinese and Japanese communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the disruptive impact of World War I, which challenged established certainties about Western civilization.³ It then moves on to the era of globalization and neoliberalism, which has spurred new forms of exchange.

The most comprehensive and thought-provoking section is the third one: “Diffraction Worlds of Nikkei Identities.” It commences with “Biopolitics, Orientalism, and the Asian Immigrant as Monster in Salazar’s *La medianoche del japonés* and Rodríguez’s *Asesinato en una lavandería china*,” the exceptional chapter by Ignacio López-Calvo, a key figure in the advancement of the field and the author or editor of several innovative books.⁴ This chapter, from a biopolitical framework, examines the implications of how intellectuals classified and portrayed ethnic minorities (in both cases originating from transpacific migrations) by comparing the works of the Peruvian journalist Jorge Salazar (1991) and the writer Juan José Rodríguez (1996). By contrasting both texts, López-Calvo effectively analyzes how both literary productions represent the process of how the “nation-state imposes its sovereignty . . . by resorting to images of monstrosity to erase minorities’ worldviews and ways of being in the world, all the while enforcing the dictums of hegemonic social groups” (122). In the first case, based on the context of growing anti-Japanese racism in Peru during World War II, Salazar’s book describes how the press portrayed the case of a Japanese man who was suspected of perpetrating a massacre of seven people in 1944—based on an actual crime committed in the outskirts of Lima—showing how journalists inflated that story into a national scare. López-Calvo’s reading of Salazar’s book offers a historical approach to the growth of anti-Japanese feelings in Peru when Japan emerged as an imperialist power in East Asia. López-Calvo argues that the Peruvian press created a successful narration in which the crime was a continuation of the violence executed by Japanese imperial soldiers through the Pacific. Even though both situations were unrelated, the media portrayed Japanese communities as violent and stoked fears about Peru’s potential annexation, among other unfounded beliefs. Mamoru, the Japanese suspect, was held to embody the evil and cruelty of the Japanese government

³ Martin Bergel, in *El oriente desplazado: Los intelectuales y los orígenes del tercermundismo en la Argentina* (Universidad Nacional de Quilmes Editorial, 2015), argues that the news about horrifying violence on the European front was widely interpreted by Latin American intellectuals as a symptom of “European cultural bankruptcy” (126), propelling Latin American intellectuals to seek alternative paths of modernization in other geographies, such as projects in Asia. Bergel dedicated his study to Argentinean intellectuals, but the effect of the war was regional.

⁴ One example of these books is *The Mexican Transpacific: Nikkei Writing, Visual Arts, and Performance* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2022).

and military. Furthermore, López-Calvo notes that the novel, set in 1944, was published during Alberto Fujimori's presidency in Peru, when various intellectuals and writers were reconsidering the place of Japanese immigration in the national imaginary. In the following section of the chapter, López Calvo studies Rodríguez's book. Narrated in first person, the book tells the story of a man who fell in love with a member of a family of Mexican Chinese vampires in Mazatlán, in the Mexican state of Sinaloa. Based on Mabel Moraña's notion of monstrosity as a metaphor for an uncontrollable passion in which desire and abjection are inseparable, López-Calvo concludes that the trope of the vampire in this novel is directly associated with foreign alterity and the migrant condition.⁵

A particularly insightful contribution to the collection is Shigeko Mato's chapter "Quiet Revenges: The Infinite Intensity of the Silenced History of Japanese Peruvians in Carlos Yushimoto del Valle's 'Ciudad de Cristal.'" The chapter delves into del Valle's short story about the deportation of Japanese community members in Peru to Crystal City, Texas, during World War II. Mato's study investigated the silenced history of the wartime Japanese community in Peru from the perspective of a seven-year-old boy whose plight involved the deportation of many members of these communities to the United States. Mato's research sheds light on a challenging period for Japanese communities in Peru. By bringing up this forgotten experience by these communities, Mato reveals the systematic persecution they endured during wartime.

Another intriguing chapter is Woo Suk-kyun's "Reception of Chilean Literature and South Korean Intellectual Genealogy." This chapter offers an engaging exploration of the reception of Chilean literature in South Korea. It begins with a first-person account of the author's experiences translating Chilean authors over the past few decades. It provides a comprehensive look at the multiple factors that can influence the reception of foreign literature in different contexts and how translators must navigate these aspects. Suk-kyun adeptly outlines how intense political events, such as coups and prolonged military control, can create specific sensitivities that influence how South Korean readers and literary critics receive specific works produced in Latin America. Through what he terms the "Chilean coup narrative"—cultural productions that refer to Pinochet's coup in 1973 that replaced a socialist government with an authoritarian anticommunist regime—Suk-kyun argues that audiences in South Korea felt a sense of familiarity with the Chilean case due to some similarities with the coup d'état orchestrated by Park Chung-hee in 1961. The chapter traces the emergence of two distinct genealogies surrounding Chilean literary works among the South Korean public in the 1960s and 1980s: one that came from translating Pablo Neruda's poetry after 1951 that appealed to "subversive" intellectuals, referring to radical liberalism instead of left-wing ideologies, and the other based on Latin American influence over South Korean writer Kim-Nam-ju, who criticized US interventionism over strategic nations, agreeing that Latin America should "be considered a mirror of Korean society" (114). Suk-kyun's groundbreaking work emphasizes the essential role of translation issues in transpacific cultural encounters and exchanges. Understanding and analyzing the circuits and dynamics through which cultural productions circulate is crucial for mapping experiences, contexts, and futures shared across the Pacific.

In their book *East Asia, Latin America, and the Decolonization of Transpacific Studies*, Chiara Olivieri and Jordi Serrano-Muñoz aim to apply what they term a "decolonial-transpacific model" to research transpacific phenomena in the social sciences. The model is not limited to a specific group of authors; it is described as the "development of emancipating dynamics of knowledge production and reproduction from North-centric epistemological cages" (8). The book, consisting of twelve chapters, seeks to inspire new perspectives by not taking for granted the transpacific as a stable concept by appealing to recontextualize spaces, connections, narratives, and experiences in search of potential solutions to

⁵ The reference is from Moraña's book *El monstruo como máquina de guerra* (Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2017), 327.

investigative problems. Olivieri and Serrano-Muñoz reconsider traditional theories related to “transpacific” studies and “decolonial work.” Following in the footsteps of other scholars such as Arif Dirlik, Naoki Sakay, Hyon Joo Yoo, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama, among others, in defining transpacific exchanges as a field, they emphasize the importance of adopting a flexible understanding of transpacific that integrates diverse meanings and perspectives while avoiding an uncritical embrace of relativism that validates any position. However, each research study brings up its own theoretical and methodological frameworks. Identifying a common thread or general argument among the chapters makes it challenging. The theoretical link between Olivieri and Serrano-Muñoz and other authors’ approaches is somewhat tenuous due to a lack of consistent theoretical framework across several chapters in the book. While the book focuses on contact zones where colonial divisions are evident, it does not consistently specify the postcolonial frameworks to which they are referring.

“Between North and South: Colombia in Korean War Exhibitions,” by Gina Catherine León Cabrera, is another significant case study. León Cabrera examines how different institutional leaders have sought to shape memories of the Korean War on the basis of their political agendas. The author contrasts the portrayal of the same conflict in the Korean and Colombian contexts. Instead of focusing on the decolonial dynamics proposed by the authors in the introduction, this chapter has adopted an interpretative framework rooted in social memory studies. It engages with two established methodological positions in museum studies: one that focuses on the museum’s sociogenesis processes and their role in shaping social order and another that examines the ideological dimensions underlying museum narratives.⁶ Despite the intention to consider the local context in understanding the proliferation of national-based narratives about the conflict, geopolitical phenomena were discussed without integrating the decolonial theoretical frames proposed by the editors. For instance, the ambivalent representation of the United Nations in the Korean War exhibition at the Seoul War Memorial and the involvement of countries like Greece, India, and Turkey, whose participation was influenced by the benefits of the Marshall Plan, were only mentioned, not extensively analyzed. Another case with potential use of decolonial frameworks is when the author exposes the intrusion of the United States’ presence in shaping the memory production process, which inhibited local debates in South Korea. The thought-provoking analysis of the policy on memory raises questions about how memory production is influenced by the interests of dominant powers. Although the work provides a detailed analysis of how local contexts of national discourse production impact memory construction processes, it overlooks the power differentials underlying narratives in postcolonial scenarios. Additionally, the narrow focus on the historical contexts of Korea and Colombia during the conflict limited the analysis.

Yoan Molinero-Gerbeau and Gennaro Avallone’s chapter provides valuable insights into the relationship between migration and global capitalism by reviewing specific concepts used in the field. Referring to Wallerstein’s world-system analysis, the authors critically examine how traditional social science has tended to understand migration processes just from the role of states without contemplating other variables.⁷ They also highlight the

⁶ León Cabrera refers to the works of Tony Bennet, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Routledge, 1995), and Gordon J. Fyfe, “Established-Outsider Relations and the Socio-Genesis of the Museum,” *Historical Social Research* 41, no. 3 (2016): 54–80. Although it is not explicitly defined in the article or quoted references, it can be inferred from the chapter’s argument that León Cabrera understands the process of how museums are constructed in social, cultural, and political dynamics. The sociogenesis process argues that museums are a reflection of the societies that produce them.

⁷ Immanuel Wallerstein’s works are central to the critique proposed by decolonial studies scholars. Understanding economic and social organization from a global scale based on the core-periphery model is crucial for developing these analyses. For a long explanation of this scope, see Immanuel Wallerstein, ed., *The Essential Wallerstein* (New Press, 2000).

importance of postcolonial and decolonial theories—particularly Wallerstein—in challenging the hegemonic perspective of capitalism and offer theoretical frameworks to free migration from the state-centric epistemology of the world system. Throughout the chapter, the authors effectively critique the push-pull model used to explain migration processes in social sciences.⁸ The chapter astutely notes how specific approaches to migration studies tend to assume that communities decided to migrate as a result of rational decision-making. Instead, the authors propose analyzing the migration process from a migrant-centered approach by recognizing that human spatial mobility does not adapt to the state's view but rather exceeds it. This approach acknowledges disciplinary structures that states apply to migrants. However, the chapter emphasizes the necessity of not applying states' categories to analyze a phenomenon that cannot be fully explained by the perspective and interests of the states. The chapter brings up an insightful discussion that paves the way for further research in migration studies, particularly for initiatives aiming to adopt decolonial perspectives within the framework of transpacific exchanges.

The study of migration and its intersection with the production of racial hierarchies has been a consistent focus in the growing field of transpacific studies. A key topic of discussion revolves around how migration processes either uphold or challenge racial hierarchies, shaping debates in cultural and historiographical research. The book *Race and Migration in the Transpacific*, edited by Yasuko Takezawa and Akio Tanabe, ambitiously captures the multifaceted interplay of migration and racialization processes. This interdisciplinary project is divided into three parts, comprising twelve chapters and an introduction by the authors. Each chapter engages in dialogue with the contexts or arguments presented in other chapters, bringing together various situations and phenomena for collective examination. While the focus of Takezawa and Tanabe's work extends beyond Latin American and Asian cultural and historical encounters—with just two chapters dedicated exclusively to these regions, often in contrast to or dialogue with other racialization processes—the book offers a valuable framework and critical tools for a comprehensive exploration of race and migration in the extensive transpacific experience.

The authors assert in their introduction that studies of race in the Americas have primarily focused on transatlantic experiences between white settlers and enslaved Black or subjugated Indigenous people. They note that racialization processes in transpacific scenarios are complicated not only by the existence of multiple imperial centers but also by the multilayered levels of marginalization rooted in various forms of hierarchical differentiation, including white-colored binarism and racialization based on nationality. One of the book's notable contributions is analyzing how transoceanic processes give birth to new hybrid racial orders, where the preexisting forms of racialization were incorporated into "scientific" knowledge on race, resulting in what the editors denominated "chimerical forms of racialization" (8).

An excellent example of this argument is presented in the first chapter by Katsuya Hirano, titled "Settler Colonialism as Encounter: On the Question of Racialization and Labor Power in the Dispossession of Ainu Lands." In this chapter, the author examines how the Japanese Empire imported North American settler-colonial policies, described as a biopolitical system, and applied them to indigenous Ainu people. As a result, Ainu communities in Hokkaido were labeled a "vanishing race" (40), which discursively justified the migration of Japanese settlers to the island. In transpacific encounters shaped by migration, the immigrant community grapples not only with the racial hierarchies of their

⁸ Molinero-Gerbeau and Avallone refer to this model (also called the hydraulic model) aside from liberal theories (particularly the interdependence model) as hegemonic paradigms in migration studies that tend to naturalize the structure and effects of the world system. On the hydraulic model, see Michael T. Todaro, "A Model of Labour Migration and Urban Unemployment in Less-Developed Countries," *American Economic Review* 59, no. 1 (1969): 138–148.

country of origin but also with the racial dynamics of their new home. Yu Tokunaga's "From Anti-Japanese to Anti-Mexican: Linkages of Racialization Experiences in 1920s California" offers a compelling analysis of how racial systems intersect within the same space. Drawing from primary sources, Tokunaga simultaneously compares three racial hierarchies: the racial order from Mexico that Mexican immigrants to California reproduced, the racial conceptions that Japanese immigrants brought with them, and the white-dominant racial system in Southern California when they migrated.⁹ Tokunaga's chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the book's global discussion, highlighting how transpacific migration disrupted local racial hierarchies and complicated the formation of subjectivities within specific populations. In the late nineteenth century, the presence of Japanese migrants in California disrupted the existing racial divisions brought from their native country as they interacted with people from Mexico and with European-descended settlers. This led to the destabilization of hierarchical systems of division, rendering them unnatural despite the networks of solidarity, competition, or exclusion established among different racialized communities.

Examining cultural productions that arose in this context is one way of tracing racialization discourses under imperial rule. In his chapter "Racism in Imperial and Post-Imperial Japanese Language Literature," Ryuichi Narita contends that the epistemic structures of imperial Japan's colonial rule persisted even after the end of World War II, as the dynamics between the imperialist regime and the colonial populace—as Manchuria, Korea, Taiwan, and communities from settlers' colonization, particularly Brazil—were reconfigured in a new setting (157). Narita's chapter discusses the transnational genre of literature known as "Japanese language literature" in relation to imperial-colonial and postimperial-postcolonial issues. The chapter argues that the discourse on national origin in literary productions shapes and reshapes the concept of race. The chapter offers a thought-provoking analysis of the lasting influence of imperialism on the development of a literary national discourse. It explores how literary works in Japanese languages written by individuals in the colonies or settlements dispute to the definition of Japanese literature. Starting from the academic curricular debates regarding the designation of the field of study, the author explores how the instruction of literary works in Japan transitioned from a focus on national identity (Japanese literature) to a language-centered approach, encompassing literary works written in Japanese within colonial or occupied territories. This approach enables Narita to dedicate a subsection of the chapter to "colonial literature," a genre of Japanese-language literature produced outside of Japan that delves into the processes of self-identity among Japanese migrants and their descendants in Brazil. In Ricardo Ueki's production case, Narita argues that immigrants in Brazil "redefined their identity as minorities who chose to live as an integral part of a foreign land" (164–165). Colonial literature's experience contrasts with the Japanese language's literary production in colonies such as Korea or Manchuria. In the latter, identity was interpreted as a means to dominate others through the imposition of the ruler's culture and language. Despite effectively articulating the main concerns of the chapter, the section only briefly outlines the conditions of colonial literature and a few author cases, leaving the approach somewhat underwhelming.

In recent years, the study of Japan's relationship with Latin America has gained significant attention in transpacific studies. The increasing importance of Japanese

⁹ Tokunaga's discussion of various racial hierarchies coexisting within the exact geographic location draws on another chapter in the book: Hiroshi Sekiguchi's "Burakumin Emigrants to America: Historical Experience of 'Racialization' and Solidarity Across the Pacific." Sekiguchi's pioneering research delves into the role of race in the migration of the Burakumin people, a Japanese minority in the traditional social system who lack any phenotypical distinction. The study finds that Burakumin communities, upon being racialized in the United States, engaged in internal dialogues about solidarity and resistance in their native Japan.

imperial ambitions in Latin America has been at the forefront of this critical and theoretical renaissance. *The Japanese Empire and Latin America*, edited by Pedro Iacobelli and Sydney Xu Lu, challenges established ideas in the field and paves the way for new avenues of research by providing a detailed examination of the geopolitical contexts in which Japanese imperial expansionism emerged. This project compiles the most essential discussions from recent decades about Japanese presence in Latin America. The book brings together contributions from leading scholars in the field, including renowned experts such as Toake Endoh, Eiichiro Azuma, Seth Jacobowitz, Ignacio López-Calvo, and the editors themselves, Iacobelli and Xu Lu, among others. Every chapter in the book develops its argument based on the exceptional scope proposed by the editors: Japan's imperial history, colonialism, and even domestic politics cannot be adequately comprehended without considering the multidimensional links with Latin America. By reviewing the place of Japanese migration to Latin America in the global history of migration and settler colonialism, the book reexamines the location and significance of the Japanese empire by focusing on how the Asian power shaped the transoceanic movement of people, institutions, and ideas. These three factors work as subdivisions: The first three chapters aim to analyze the roles played by the imperial government in managing emigration and promoting trade with Latin American countries and how those processes transformed the government; chapters 4–6 examine the experience of Japanese migrants from trans-American and transpacific perspectives; and the last chapters are dedicated to studies that highlight how Japanese migration to Latin America should be considered in the context of Japanese colonialism and expansionism.

The post-Meiji state's promotion of migration to Latin America relied on establishing strong institutions within the imperial structure. The simultaneous development of private companies, infrastructure, and industry, along with a specific political environment, created the necessary material and discursive conditions for Japanese expansion across the Pacific. Toake Endoh's state-centered study of Japanese migration to South America, which was a political strategy for nation builders, examines prewar imperialist-expansionist ideology in two dimensions. First, emigration served the purpose of internal control by alleviating social dissatisfaction and restoring order by removing undesirables. Emigration policies targeted several groups of unionized peasants and workers from rural areas known for their economic and social turbulence. Second, the promotion of emigration was a means to accumulate wealth, status, and power by mobilizing diasporic resources and symbols into frontier developments in the Western Hemisphere.

From Iacobelli and Xu Lu's suggestion to view Japanese migration to Latin America as an imperial strategy, numerous scholars have emphasized that the expansion of the Japanese empire was closely tied to the implementation of infrastructure projects and technological advancements.¹⁰ Significant upgrades to infrastructure and technology were necessary to facilitate the movement of Japanese citizens across the Pacific Basin. Elijah J. Greenstein's study of Japanese shipping lines during the years 1905–1941 provides a comprehensive analysis of the maritime transportation network for merchants and migrants. Moreover, it sheds light on the role of these shipping lines in generating foreign exchange that contributed to Japan's ascension on the global stage as a military, technological, and imperial power. The chapter meticulously outlines the routes, companies, destinations, and ownership of Japanese shipping lines involved in transporting migrants to Latin America. Greenstein adeptly portrays the efforts undertaken by Japanese authorities to channel attention and resources into enhancing oceanic infrastructure. Notably, this

¹⁰ See Aaron Stephen Moore, *Constructing East Asia: Technology, Ideology, and Empire in Japan's Wartime Era, 1931–1945* (Stanford University Press, 2013); Hiromi Mizuno, *Science for the Empire: Scientific Nationalism in Modern Japan* (Stanford University Press, 2009).

strategic shift is underpinned by the Japanese discourse on shipping, which framed it as an effort to “conquer or dominate ocean spaces” from a military perspective (55).

A project on a related theme that closely aligns with the framework proposed by Iacobelli and Xu Lu is the book *Peligro amarillo: La sombra de Japón durante la Revolución Mexicana*, by Víctor Kerber Palma. With expertise in international studies, diplomatic history, and the interactions between Japan and Mexico, Kerber Palma meticulously describes the historical context and effectively captures the complex relationship between these two nations during the Mexican Revolution, adding the significant variable of the role of the United States in maintaining its influence over Latin America. Focusing on Japan’s imperial status, the book offers a novel perspective on the spread of rumors about a Mexico-Japan alliance as a threat to US national security and its impact on multinational relations at the beginning of the twentieth century. This work fills a gap in the literature on migration and exchanges between Mexico and Japan, which has often overlooked the role of imperial powers in shaping perceptions of national security.

Kerber Palma contends that from 1905 to 1924, the relationship between Mexico and Japan was shaped by Washington’s apprehension about the potential for Japanese military intervention from bases in northern Mexico, particularly Baja California, where Japanese communities had established themselves during the early twentieth century. The book adeptly reconstructs a tense national and international context poised on the edge of upheaval. By emphasizing primary sources such as press articles, diplomatic diaries, international treaties, and cultural productions, the author illustrates how Japan remained a persistent and disquieting theme for nearly all Mexican governments at the turn of the century. Kerber Palma effectively reshaped the diplomatic landscape by closely examining key events, such as the interception of the Zimmermann Telegram. In 1917, the German foreign secretary proposed the potential recovery of Mexican territories lost to the United States after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, if Mexico chose to support the German side (which Japan would later join). During this tense diplomatic period, US foreign policy, guided by the Monroe Doctrine, aimed to uncover potential plots between Mexican authorities and other emerging powers to challenge its influence in both the region and the Pacific. Additionally, Kerber Palma successfully reconstructs, especially in the book’s first part, how important figures in the press and politics consolidated the discourse of the “yellow peril” in California, articulating racial and geopolitical issues.

The monograph’s most effective points lie in its reconstruction of how Japanese diplomacy, in a context of constant expansion of its global influence, managed to navigate the turbulent transitions during the Mexican Revolution. The book’s scope goes beyond the review of diplomatic connections between Mexico and the two dominant powers in the Pacific. It effectively reconstructs a political and cultural landscape in the United States and Mexico, focusing on how both public opinions followed Japan’s rise with a mix of anticipation and reservation. Through Japanese representations in the press and cultural products such as poetry, painting, and films, the book sheds light on a once-prevalent perception throughout Latin America that has been overlooked since World War II: Mexico, like other Latin American countries, saw in Japan the potential for an alternative path to modernization. With a blend of hope and skepticism, Latin Americans observed Japan’s military and technological ascent and the disruption of racial hierarchies established by European and US dominance. The book is exceptionally well written and engaging, skillfully capturing complex moments of the Mexican Revolution by focusing on a seemingly overlooked actor. It introduces potent new dimensions to international negotiation, migration, and war through its narrative of historical events, often employing a literary tone. However, its intense engagement with the subject matter can be a double-edged sword. While the creative license taken in the book adds to its allure, it may also affect—at some points in the book—the historical accuracy of the narrative and raises

questions about what came from primary sources and what is Kerber Palma's overinterpretation.

The investigation of transpacific exchanges from distinct national perspectives, as in Kerber Palma's work, has become increasingly prevalent in the new generation of transpacific studies. These studies illustrate the configurations of flows, exchanges, alliances, confrontations, and various networks among populations through comparative analyses on both sides of the Pacific. Ximena Alba Vallalever's monograph, *The Migration of Chinese Women to Mexico City*, is another insightful work that delves into the complexities of such transits. Despite the title implying a one-way movement, the book explores two interconnected networks: the migration of Chinese women to Mexico City, particularly their presence in popular markets like Tepito, and the network of Chinese women in China, specifically in the Yiwu market, Zhejiang Province. Using anthropological methodologies, particularly ethnography, Alba Vallalever gathers testimonies from Chinese migrants in Mexico City markets to reveal the diverse phenomena associated with this specific transpacific migration. The book is divided into three parts, an introduction, and a conclusion. The first part focuses on the internal dynamics of popular markets, using the case of Tepito's market in Mexico City to describe the social tensions and internal structures. It also examines the strategies developed by Chinese migrant women to navigate and survive in these markets. The second part delves into Yiwu's development as a global hub for merchandise and explores how Latin America established commercial ties with the city's market. This section also contextualizes the role of gender division in both internal and external migration processes of Chinese women. The final part analyzes the interaction between migration and the construction of belonging. It examines how communities can create alternatives for survival by establishing new links that connect different spaces through mechanisms of economic anchorage.

The book traces these women's experiences during the era of neoliberal globalization, analyzing contemporary relations between China and Mexico and the global dynamics of production, distribution, and consumption of commodities. Following the theory of global cities,¹¹ Villalever argues that nation-states construct spaces ruled by financial flows to guarantee the circulation of commodities, information, and capital. Villalever's gendered lens on Chinese migration to Mexico opens new questions regarding the formation of subjectivities by vulnerable subjects and the possible resistance based on solidarity, using popular markets as the key site of study. The strength of Villalever's research lies in her balanced study of the interactions of urban spaces, gender, and capital circulation in cities that have designed environments for the transit of goods, information, and people. Her precise observations of how popular markets reveal structural inequities in cities that prioritize capital circulation and accumulation underscore the need to develop new interpretative tools in a multipolar world. However, the argument is somewhat repetitive, and it is unclear whether her conclusions apply beyond her specific case studies.

The field of transpacific cultural, political, and migratory exchanges is experiencing a renewed surge in interest. Scholars have been developing new theoretical and critical frameworks to better understand these phenomena. Over the past two decades, there have been significant changes in the way we approach transpacific exchanges in cultural and social studies. The edited books and monographs reviewed here not only provide insights into the complex historical processes that connect both sides of the Pacific but also address the main questions that guide current research. In summary, a new era is dawning for transpacific studies, and a growing field is successfully navigating the complex waters of almost five centuries of exchanges. Given China's rise as a global power, akin to that of Japan in the early twentieth century, it is essential to establish robust methodological and

¹¹ See Saskia Sassen, *The Global City* (Princeton University Press, 2001).

theoretical frameworks for comprehending Latin America's interactions with Asia. This entails examining the characteristics of both regions without viewing them through the lens of Europe or the United States.

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Cite this article: Díaz-Martínez, Sebastián. A Transpacific Renaissance: New Perspectives in Cultural and Social Studies. *Latin American Research Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/lar.2025.4>