

CONNECTING THE INDIES: THE HISPANO-ASIAN PACIFIC WORLD IN EARLY MODERN GLOBAL HISTORY

Conectando as Índias: o mundo hispano-asiático
do Pacífico na História Global Moderna

Conectando a las Indias: el mundo hispano-asiático
del Pacífico en la Historia Global Moderna

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ABSTRACT

This article reconsiders the place of colonial Latin America in global history by examining the Transpacific interactions, conflicts, and exchanges between Latin America and Asia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Setting aside earlier imperial histories that present the Pacific as a 'Spanish Lake', I conceptualize a dynamic Hispano-Asian Pacific World that was forged by a myriad of actors in and around the Pacific basin. Instead of a Pacific dominated by far-off Spain, my research reveals a Transpacific world that in fact defied imperial efforts to claim, regulate, or convert it. I structure this study along three broad lines of inquiry: the economic ties that made the Asian-Latin American 'Rim', the consequences of human transits and cultural exchanges along new Transpacific conduits, and the barriers of distance and culture that limited both cosmopolitanism and imperialism. For societies in Latin America, this Hispano-Asian Pacific world provided them with greater autonomy than the Atlantic world. They shared, alongside diverse groups in this maritime world, a common story of circumvention, of freewheeling exchanges, and of checked powers, for no single shoreline, empire, or group predominated. Ultimately, by charting the currents of Hispano-Asian interactions in the Pacific world, I provide a riposte to theories in global historiography that have situated Latin America at the periphery of Western Europe.

KEYWORDS: Early Modern Period; colonial Mexico; New Spain; Philippines; China; Transpacific History.

RESUMO

Este artigo reconsidera o lugar da América Latina colonial na história global examinando as interações transpácificas, os conflitos e os intercâmbios entre a América Latina e a Ásia nos séculos XVI e XVII. Deixando de lado histórias imperiais anteriores que apresentam o Pacífico como um "lago espanhol", concebo um dinâmico Mundo Pacífico Hispano-Asiático que foi forjado por uma miríade de atores na e ao redor da bacia do Pacífico. Em vez de um Pacífico dominado pela longínqua Espanha, minha pesquisa revela um mundo transpácifico que de fato desafiava os esforços imperiais para reivindicá-los, regulá-los ou convertê-los. Estruturo este estudo de acordo com três grandes linhas de investigação: os laços econômicos que fizeram o "laço" asiático-latino-americano, as consequências dos trânsitos humanos e dos intercâmbios culturais ao longo de novas condutas transpácificas, e as barreiras da distância e da cultura que limitavam o cosmopolitismo e o imperialismo. Para as sociedades da América Latina, esse mundo do Pacífico hispano-asiático lhes proporcionou maior autonomia do que o mundo atlântico. Eles compartilhavam, ao lado de diversos grupos neste mundo marítimo, uma história comum de evasão, de trocas livres e de poderes controlados, pois nenhuma linha de costa, império ou grupo predominava. Em última análise, ao traçar as correntes das interações hispano-asiáticas no mundo do Pacífico, dou uma réplica às teorias da historiografia global que situaram a América Latina na periferia da Europa Ocidental.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Idade Moderna; México colonial; Nova Espanha; Filipinas; China; História Transpácifica.

RESUMEN

Este artículo reconsidera el lugar de la América Latina colonial en la historia global examinando las interacciones transpácificas, los conflictos y los intercambios entre América Latina y Asia en los siglos XVI y XVII. Dejando a un lado anteriores historias imperiales que presentan al Pacífico como un "lago español", conceptualizo un dinámico mundo hispano-asiático del Pacífico que fue forjado por una miríada de actores en y alrededor de la cuenca del Pacífico. En lugar de un Pacífico dominado por la lejana España, mi investigación revela un mundo transpácifico que de hecho desafiaba los esfuerzos imperiales para reclamar, regular o convertirlo. Estructura este estudio a lo largo de tres grandes líneas de investigación: los lazos económicos que hicieron el "Borde" asiático-latinoamericano, las consecuencias de los tránsitos humanos y los intercambios culturales a lo largo de nuevos conductos transpácificos y las barreras de distancia y cultura que limitaban el cosmopolitismo y imperialismo. Para las sociedades latinoamericanas, este mundo del Pacífico hispanoasiático les proporcionó mayor autonomía que el mundo atlántico. Compartieron, junto a diversos grupos en este mundo marítimo, una historia común de elusión, de intercambios libres y de poderes controlados, pues no existía ninguna línea de costa, imperio o grupo. En última instancia, trazando las corrientes de las interacciones hispanoasiáticas en el mundo del Pacífico, ofrezco una respuesta a las teorías de la historiografía global que han situado a América Latina en la periferia de Europa Occidental.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Periodo Moderno Temprano; México colonial; Nueva España; Filipinas; China; Historia Transpácifica.

Manila, July 1589. A Spanish missionary named Fray Juan de Cobo disembarked from a galleon after a long voyage from Acapulco and stepped into an emerging Pacific world. Only eighteen years had passed since the Spanish conquest had transformed what had been a minor port on the South China Sea into the pulsing center of a new Transpacific economy. On the docks and in the markets, Fray Juan witnessed the lucrative first encounter between the riches of Asia and the brash new mineral wealth of America. This new emporium drew people from every corner of the world. Astonished by what he saw, he wrote to his brethren back in Mexico: "the diversity here is immense, such that I could go on forever trying to differentiate lands and peoples. There are Castilians from all provinces. There are Portuguese and Italians; Dutch, Greeks, Canary Islanders, and Mexican Indians. There are slaves from Africa brought by the Spaniards [through America], and others brought by the Portuguese [through India]. There is even an African Moor with his turban here. There are Japanese, Javanese from Java, and Bengalese from Bengal. Among all these peoples are the Chinese, whose numbers here are untold and who outnumber everyone else. From China there are peoples so different from each other, and from provinces as distant, as Italy is from Spain. Finally, of the *mestizos*, the mixed-race people here, I cannot even write, because in Manila there is no limit to the combinations of peoples with peoples. This is in the city, where all the buzz is" (Remesal, 1629: 680-1).

The place of Latin America in global history can be rewritten from sites like the docks of Fray Juan's Manila.¹ In the contact zones that formed part of the early modern Pacific World we can reconsider the interactions, conflicts, and *mestizaje* that linked Latin American societies to global processes.² Seen from without we can better gauge the global interactions and impacts of colonial societies in the Americas.³ Global history tends to relegate Latin America to a peripheral role as a supplier of commodities: decisive in economic terms, the region is all too often cast as a passive actor on a global stage erected by others (Brown, 2015: 368-9).⁴ The history of the early modern Pacific world has the potential to provide a powerful riposte to the Eurocentric narratives that have prevailed in global history, as well as the inward-looking Area Studies paradigm. Like the routes that linked Brazil to Africa and Asia across the 'Ethiopic Ocean' of the South Atlantic, the early modern Pacific presents us with an early modern maritime space that decentered Europe (Alencastro, 2015).⁵ At the very antipodes of Iberia, this marchland between the East and West

Indies allows historians to trace the agency of colonial Latin American societies in global history, especially in overseas settings that regional experts have tended to ignore.

For two and half centuries, between the Spanish conquests of the Philippines and early nineteenth-century decolonization in Latin America, yearly voyages between Acapulco and Manila ferried people, goods, and ideas between Asia and Latin America, generating an unprecedented global *mestizaje* (intermingling and intermixture). This emerging early modern Pacific world did not resemble Mediterranean or Atlantic systems. Instead it was an early modern ocean of fragile balances of power and intense linkages of economies and cultures, which connected places as varied as the silver mines of Potosí in Bolivia and the pottery kilns of Jīngdézhen in China, or the churches of Mexico City with Franciscan missions in Nagasaki. These transpacific relations and encounters set the stage for far-reaching transformations in Asia and America – cultural exchanges and conflicts, voluntary and forced migrations, global *mestizaje* and ecological changes.

This early modern Pacific world has long been the domain of imperial and economic history. To this day historians of the Spanish Empire examine the early modern Pacific as an antipodal 'Spanish Lake' that was Spanish only for lack of serious European challengers. Yet this is a misnomer, since far-off imperial Spain was ambivalent, and at times even hostile, regarding Asian ties to its Latin American colonies (Shurz, 1939; Spate 1979; Buschmann et al., 2014). Instead, actors *in and around* the Pacific basin itself forged these transpacific ties: Mexican creoles, Chinese traders, Japanese Christians, Filipino mariners, Spanish friars, and *mestizo* soldiers from both American and Asian shores, among many others. These diverse groups made a Hispano-Asian Pacific world: a fluid space of encounter at the intersection between monsoonal Asia and Transpacific America. They engaged in lucrative material exchanges, negotiated the terms of cultural and religious encounters, and changed the material cultures and worldviews of societies around the Pacific basin. I structure this study along three broad lines of inquiry: the making of the Asian-Latin American 'Rim' as a sphere of economic and cultural interaction and exchange, the social and cultural consequences of mobility and exchange along new Transpacific conduits, and the barriers of distance and culture that limited imperial projects and transoceanic integration. By connecting the two 'Indies' of America and Asia, I propose a global history that challenges both Eurocentrism and Area-Studies regionalism, is bottom-up as opposed to systemic, and that ultimately attests to the fragility and incompleteness of global interactions and exchanges.

THE RIM

In global historiography, Latin America's role in the Pacific World has largely consisted of a story of material exchange. Over the last thirty years, economic his of colonial Latin America and Ming China have revealed the sheer scale of the material exchange of American silver for Asian luxury products. Sustained contact between Asia and America commenced with three concurrent changes that took place in the Pacific in the 1570s. Each development occurred independently of the others, but they all had one common element: silver. The first event happened in China, where prolonged monetary crises resulting from overprinting paper money led the government to require that all tax payments be made in silver, which was scarce and highly valued. This rising demand for silver changed China's trading policy. After centuries of bans on foreign trade, in 1567 the emperor legalized it, hoping that this would bring more silver into the economy (Flynn and Giraldez, 1994: 71-77; Boxer, 2004: 191-192; Lin, 1990: 172; von Glahn, 1996: 117-188). Meanwhile, across the Pacific in Potosí, Bolivia, miners revived a declining silver industry by introducing the mercury amalgamation process of refining, which quadrupled production, while labor costs plummeted due to forced indigenous labor (Cross, 1983: 405). Thus, a rising Chinese demand for silver was paired by a rising supply of American silver. Supply and demand then converged in the third event, the conquest of Manila in 1571. For the economic historians Arturo Giráldez and Dennis Flynn, this was the birth of the 'Pacific Rim', and indeed of globalization itself (1995: 209; 1994: 78).⁶

Yet it bears notistorianng that in speaking of a 'Pacific Rim', we are employing a term that is loaded with hype and expectation regarding the fortunes to be made from the economic relations between America and Asia. And so it was centuries ago, when even Hernán Cortés dreamed of Asia, as if Tenochtitlán did not suffice (León Portilla, 1985). Asia held a powerful place in Spanish American imaginations as a rich emporium, as a vineyard of souls, and as a field of martyrdom when relations soured. Whereas the Portuguese reached East Asia having faced their limitations in their interactions with South Asian rulers, Spaniards who voyaged westward from Mexico into the Pacific carried the experience of recent New World conquests. Although Spanish rule in America was constantly negotiated and contested, the depth and extension of Spanish hegemony imbued colonial culture with a sense of inexorable advance. The path to Asia from the New World produced a uniquely Spanish American orientalism with its own aspirations, knowledge base, and representations. This colonial culture of Transpacific expansion exalted and actively pursued an ideal of Asian opulence, and it drew heavily on the brashness and utopianism of recent American conquests (Crewe, 2015). This orientalist culture was not a mere derivative of globalizing commerce, as grand macro-economic narratives

assume. Instead it shaped aspirations and patterns of consumption that in turn spurred trade and expanding worldviews (Hunt, 2014: 55, 68; Ellis, 2012; Carr et al., 2015).

The tale of this early Pacific Rim is not so much a story of economic integration as one of mutual attraction. In Manila, Mexican and Peruvian merchants traded their abundant silver for Chinese silks and porcelains, as well as ivories, jades, and spices from throughout Asia. Due to high Chinese demand, American silver carried twice the purchasing power in China than it had in Europe (Flynn and Giraldez, 1995: 206). In the coastal Chinese province of Fujian, one observer marveled that in Manila “the foreigners use silver like we use copper money” (Lin, 1990: 207). Around the same time, a Spanish governor of Manila wrote derisively of the Chinese: “Silver is their god, and whatever way they can get it is their religion” (Blair and Robertson, 1905: vol. xxii, p. 248). Thus, Mexican traders thought the Chinese sold off their silks for a steal, while Chinese merchants marveled at how much silver Mexicans put up for medium-grade products. Culture clashes were bound to arise, but business was very good. Nonetheless, most of this trade took place despite opposition from imperial courts in Madrid and Beijing. Official bullionism and protectionism sought to re-establish Mexican dependence on a Seville-centered Atlantic economy. This, however, partly explains why the Pacific was so alluring in Mexico. There, Creoles and Peninsular Spaniards alike – priests, port officials, even viceroys – invested in a booming contraband trade with Asia that flouted all Spanish regulations and bans. Between 1580 and 1640, Mexican merchants shipped an estimated 2 to 3 million pesos *per year* (50 to 75 *tons*), far surpassing the Crown’s limit of 500,000 pesos. Investors regularly quadrupled and quintupled their original investments (Flynn and Giraldez, 1994: 82 and 1995: 206; Te Paske, 1983: 435-6; Atwell, 1982: 74; Chuan, 1969: 79). In the colonized Philippines, even a native Tagalog *cabildo* (town council) boosted its treasury by investing in the Transpacific trade.⁷ Rather than a ‘Spanish Lake’, then, this was an Asian-American Rim *in spite of Spain* (Borah, 1954).⁸

In silver-rich Mexico, people of all classes consumed Asian goods, donning silk shawls, decorating homes with *biombos* (*byōbu*, Japanese folding screens), and drinking chocolate in blue-and-white *mancerinas*, chocolate-drinking cups that Chinese potters produced for the Mexican and Peruvian markets (Kuwayama, 1999; Pierce and Otsuka, 2009; Carletti, 1701: 118; Gage, 2005: 85; TePaske, 1983, 429-435). The Transpacific trade also opened up new mental horizons for residents in Mexico City. In 1603, the local poet Bernardo de Balbuena boasted that “From the Philippines comes the finest: everything the Chinese manage to pack into their junks”. Though a colony, Mexico’s position between two oceans allowed Balbuena to imagine it at the center of a global economy: “México divides the world equally into two, and as if to a sun, it seems the whole earth gravitates towards *her*” (Balbuena, 2009: 20).

In China, meanwhile, the sudden influx of American silver transformed the economy. Porcelain kilns proliferated in the interior, where workers mass-produced export wares for wages paid in silver (Medley, 1993; Scott, 1992). At the customs house in the port of Haicheng in Fujian province, where silver-laden junks returned from Manila, revenues jumped ten-fold between 1570 and 1590. Local trading families in Fujian increased not only their wealth, but also their political power and social status. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the principal merchants of Fujian entered the Chinese gentry class despite the fact that merchants lay at the lower rungs of the Confucian order (Brook, 1998: 134-5, 211-2). In Beijing, meanwhile, imperial coffers doubled during the first two decades of Transpacific trade (Atwell, 1982: 74). “The King of China could build a palace with all the silver bars from Peru that are carried to his country”, grumbled one Spanish admiral in Manila (Blair and Robertson, 1905, vol. 29, p. 71). In the Chinese emperor’s actual palace, Father Matteo Ricci’s world map identified the distant South American source of Beijing’s rising revenues in three Chinese characters: *pei-tu-hsi* – Potosí (Giraldez, 2008: 18; Ch’en, 1939: 349). Manila was also the site of a more mundane ‘Columbian Exchange’. As they shuttled between Manila and Fujian, Chinese migrants introduced to China American crops such as tobacco, tubers, and corn. In Fujian a governor noticed one American plant that seemed nothing short of magical: “Over there grows the sweet potato, which grows anywhere and does not need sowing or planting. The barbarians habitually eat it.” The new crop could not have come at a better time in Fujian, for when famine struck the province in 1590, the spud “sufficed the people for a whole year” (Lin, 1990: 207; Atwell, 2001: 60-1). Over the next two centuries, this and other American crops would revolutionize Chinese agriculture and demography (Mazumdar, 2000: 70).

The early modern Transpacific economy thus allowed people on both shores – whether in imperial China or colonial Mexico – to imagine themselves at the center of an expanding world.

CONDUITS AND CONTACT ZONES

While histories of Latin America in Pacific and global history thoroughly examine the continent’s role in material exchanges, the lived experiences of mobility and cross-cultural interactions that made such exchanges possible are only beginning to be examined in all their diversity. In this regard, it is essential to move past macro-historical narratives that tend to deal with early modern Latin America in exclusively economic terms. Trade, after all, was contingent on human connections. It depended on the human transits that interlinked colonial Latin America with the maritime world of monsoon Asia, and it was entirely a product

of cross-cultural encounters that unfolded in volatile milieux scattered along these Transpacific circuits. Ports, mining camps, missions, markets, and *presidios* connected the Hispano-Asian Pacific world. These were destinations and way stations in innumerable tales of displacement, migration, exploration, and human trafficking. At the interstices between Latin American and Asian histories, these contact zones fall in what Sanjay Subrahmanyam has called “the cracks between Area Studies”. Subrahmanyam states that “it may very well be here, at the uncomfortable edges of our categories, that we may find important clues that help us to define the key elements of connectedness and transmission that characterize early modern history” (Subrahmanyam, 1997: 735-762). As a methodology, ‘connected history’ holds out the promise of producing global history from the bottom up – from sites like military encampments in the Moluccas, Colombian mines where indigenous laborers dug up emeralds coveted by Persian shahs, or the busy stalls in Mexico City that ran a brisk trade in Chinese silks (Lane, 2010). Synchronic instead of diachronic or comparative, this approach recovers the linkages of global history “like an electrician who repairs what time and historians have disconnected” (Gruzinski, 2010: 44; Bertrand, 2015: 3-20).⁹

For 250 years, the Manila galleon, though solitary and precarious in its reach across this vast ocean, was also a vehicle for sustained exchanges, migrations, and transformations. While the Westward voyage from Mexico to the Philippines was generally *pacífico*, the stormy return trip Eastward averaged an unbearable seven months; the Italian world-traveller Gemelli Careri thought it “the longest, most terrible navigation in the World” (Gemelli Careri, 1704: vol. 5, 255). These galleons swelled with goods and people. Crowding around the luxury goods and chests of silver, passengers from dozens of nations – some willing, others forced – crossed the Pacific in both directions. Westward-bound Mexican-born Creoles were vital to the colonization of the Philippines. As conquistadors they acquired *encomiendas* on far-flung islands, as missionaries they ‘raised a Church in Mexico’s image’ (as one chronicler put it), and as business agents they made tremendous wealth for their families back home (Grijalva, 1624). But the most significant Westward migration was that of Mexican mestizos and Indians. Recruits and press-ganged soldiers boarded the galleon in Acapulco to serve in Spain’s unending wars against Muslim resistance in Mindanao and the Moluccas, and they manned Spanish fortresses throughout the Philippine Archipelago. In all, *guachinangos* – as these Mexican-born colonists were called – outnumbered Peninsular Spaniards in the Philippines (García de los Arcos, 1996: 249; Mawsom, 2016: 87-125; Mehl, 2014, 547-579). On the Eastward voyage to Acapulco, there were returning veterans of wars and missions, Mexican and Peruvian traders, and even Armenian merchants, whose networks brought Persian rugs and Bengalese cotton from the Indian Ocean all the way to Mexico City (Aslanian, 2011: 254-257; Shurz, 1939: 136-138).

And all around them were Filipino mariners, who formed four fifths of galleon crews, some of whom had been pressed into service through the *repartimiento*. Upon their arrival in Acapulco, deserters would flee the cruel life of the galleon and settle among coastal Mexican Indians. Finally, ever-present on both voyages were servants, slaves and concubines from Asia, America, and Africa – the victims of a globalizing trade in human beings (Seijas, 2015).

The Western terminus of the galleon route spurred migration from all parts of maritime Asia, especially China. Just two decades after the founding of Spanish Manila, 30.000 Chinese migrants had arrived from Fujian province, which suffered chronic over-population and land scarcity. Wealthy merchants' vessels brought thousands of immigrants who came to work in trades that were vital for Manila's development. Virtually every mission church that was built in the Philippines, for example, was the work of Chinese masons who were paid in silver drawn from the *situado*, the yearly Mexican viceregal subsidy that funded the Philippines. In the words of one Spanish Dominican, Manila was *las Indias para los chinos*, "the Indies for the Chinese, just as the Western Indies in America are for our Spaniards".¹⁰ Fearful of the rising numbers of Chinese migrants as well as their considerable economic leverage, Spanish authorities confined the Sangleyes into a segregated district known as the Parián. Ethno-religious tensions between the Sangleyes and Spanish settlers erupted into revolts and massacres nearly every generation. Despite this, however, over the *longue durée* from the late sixteenth century to the early nineteenth century the Sangleyes were indispensable to the most lucrative Transpacific exchanges. Sangleyes defended their foothold in Manila by converting to Christianity, establishing their own local government under Spanish sovereignty, and through intermarriage and kinship networks with Filipino natives and Spaniards (Crewe, 2015). Their commerce with Mexico-based Creole and Spanish traders depended on their abilities to negotiate and adapt to the culture of Spanish colonialism. In this way, this crowded and contained space of ethno-religious exclusion on the banks of Manila's Pasig River connected other milieus in the Pacific world: the mines of Potosí with the counting houses of Fujian, and the markets of Bengal with the Plaza Mayor (Zócalo) in Mexico City.

Opulence and opportunity drew migrants from the Americas and Asia to Manila, creating a multicultural society that tensely hung between Spanish-American norms of ethno-religious exclusion and the cosmopolitanism of maritime Asia. This was not only a meeting-place of commerce or political projects; it was also a contact zone for racial and ethnic notions from America, mainland Asia, and the Indian Ocean World. Commercial success and fragile Spanish strategic interests made Manila a unique port in the Spanish empire, for this city could not survive without accommodating thousands of non-Christians – including Muslims – and many thousands more New Christians from Asia, America, and Africa. Exiles, merchants, slaves,

missionaries, soldiers, sailors, tradesmen and inquisitors from across the globe made their homes or passed through here, and the global scale of their *mestizaje* and cultural borrowing produced a multicultural society that was both by-product and guarantor of the city's commercial power. As in Spanish America, colonial authorities sought to control a bewilderingly diverse population by reducing it to ethno-religious categories, or *castas*: Spaniards (both American Creole and Peninsular), American-born *mestizos*, *indios* (non-Muslim natives of Asia as well as American natives), *mulatos* (both of American and Asian origin), Chinese *mestizos* (*mestizos de sangley*, of Chinese-Filipino intermarriage), Asian migrants from places as far-flung as Bengal (*bengalas*) or Japan (*japones*), and Chinese (*chinos* or *sangleyes*). Also present were so-called *cafres*: black Africans, Southern Indians, or islanders of Eastern Indonesia. Confounding things even further was the global scale of *mestizaje* in Manila among all of the above groups. The seventeenth-century traveller Gemelli Careri dismissed all attempts to categorize *mestizos* as a fool's errand (13).¹¹ The history of caste in Manila is the story of a transoceanic projection of colonial Latin American concepts of caste and race, which assumed that hereditary cultural traits and *naturaleza* (disposition) of non-European converts were still heavily influenced by ancestral non-Christian religions (Martínez, 2008: 15, 203). Similarly, on the other side of the Pacific Ocean Chinese and Filipino immigrants and slaves in New Spain confounded local understandings of race and caste (Seijas, 2015). Alongside the bars of silver, silks, and passengers in the galleon holds, concepts of race and ethnicity were fellow travellers: mobile, unstable, intermingling, and adapting to the local milieux of every port where they made landfall.

BARRIERS

For all its opulence and cosmopolitanism, however, the Hispano-Asian Pacific world also presents us with a reminder that global history is uneven, fragmented, and incomplete. More often than not, it is a graveyard of grand designs hatched in moments of optimism, a record of ambitious plans of economic integration and social transformation. The vast distances and limited reach of imperial powers in this Transpacific world raised barriers to transoceanic integration on the scale of the Atlantic or Indian Ocean worlds. In particular, tensions arose between Spanish America, with its official religious exclusivism and theological imperialism, and Asia, whose maritime networks pragmatically allowed for religious pluralism.

In addition to moving goods and people, the Manila Galleon convoy also seemed to open a new horizon for ambitious missionaries in Spanish America. Looking Westward from Mexico, where indigenous populations were diminishing, Spanish and Creole friars saw

– or thought they saw – a ‘vineyard of souls’ ready for harvest in Asia. Mexico served as a base for Transpacific mission networks stretching into the Philippines and East Asia, right until Independence in 1821. Mexico’s viceroyalty sent substantial public funds and private donations, its Creole clergymen enlisted in missions, and its Inquisition even tried to police a jurisdiction that laid claim to all of Asia. Moreover, the American experience, in which missions relied heavily on secular power and confrontation, informed these missionaries’ strategies for extending Christianity into Asia – precisely the opposite lessons that contemporary Portuguese missionaries were drawing from their own Asian experiences. In the words of one religious chronicler in Mexico, “they thought themselves the saviors of all Asia” (Grijalva, 1624: 272).

Yet the mission enterprise met its outer limits in the major empires of Asia. While the Mexican mission model worked in the Philippine islands, the very way by which missions had enabled Spanish colonization presented a clear warning to Chinese and Japanese observers, who were beginning to hear of how the Spanish had conquered Mexico and Peru. In East Asia, Transpacific consciousness was not only about material exchange; it also contained a dire warning about the threat that missionaries seemed to pose to their sovereignty. The Spanish mission was, according to one Japanese Buddhist monk, “a plot to take over our country without even a battle. Right before our eyes, the King [of Spain] has installed his own governors in Luzon and Mexico” (Elison, 1988: 355).¹² In Beijing, a courtier warned that missionaries employed “resourceful schemes” by which “they have subdued over thirty countries” (Ch’en, 1939: 349). The Japanese Shōgun, Hideyoshi, stated his position clearly enough in 1597, when he ordered the mass crucifixion of Spanish missionaries in Nagasaki – news of this ‘martyrdom’ transfixed Macau, Manila, and Mexico, who came together to have the victims beatified (Conover, 2011: 451-453). Even in Manila, the missionaries’ persistent efforts to convert Chinese traders had few results. But given China’s crucial role in the Transpacific economy, they had to accept the presence of 30,000 pagans in their midst. The Chinese of Manila thus became the largest group of non-Christians residing legally in the Spanish Empire; their economic leverage allowed them to freely choose *not* to convert (Crewe, 2015). Trade therefore proceeded on the condition that the mission enterprise would not play the preeminent role it had in Spanish America (Blair and Robertson, 1905: vol. xiii p. 222, vol. xvi p. 150, vol. vi p. 287, vol. xvii p. 230).¹³ Or, as a Ming chronicle put it: “The savages, seeing that they profit by trading with China, do not oppose us” (Laufer, 1908: 272). This Pacific would not be a sea of faith.

Due to its vastness, both in geography and cultural differences, the early modern Pacific world defied all efforts to claim, regulate, or convert it. There was no Braudelian convergence here. Threading through it are tales of circumvention, of freewheeling exchanges among

diverse groups, and of checked powers, for no single shoreline or group predominated. It developed in isolation from other Pacific worlds not mentioned here, like the Polynesian ‘Sea of Islands’ or the Russian/Native American Far North. By the late-eighteenth century, scientific expeditions, multinational traders, hunters, and tricksters were linking the Rim, North, and islands in new and destructive ways (Yokota, 2014: 204-19; Iglar, 2013). Numerous examples could highlight this transition, but one detail from the archives in Manila will suffice. In 1790, Spanish authorities opened Manila to free trade. In a register of arriving vessels, alongside the usual arrivals from China, Vietnam, and Java, we have evidence that a harbor official strained his ears to make sense of the odd name of a new vessel’s home port. In Spanish, he scrawled: “*Rodislán*”, from a country called “*La América Ynglesa*”. The Yankees were on their way to Canton.¹⁴ As late as 1825, Mexican officials in newly-independent Mexico were sanguine enough about their commercial prospects in East Asia that they published an official map charting the way westward to China for Acapulco merchants. An emblem depicts an eagle perched atop a sailing ship – a maritime stand-in for the cactus-perch of the eagle of Mexica prophetic myth – pointing the way forward as it had for the founders of Tenochtitlán (Espinosa y Tello, 1825). Yet the Wars of Independence crippled Mexico’s Transpacific fleet, and North American and British merchants decisively stepped into the breach. Nonetheless, the newcomers’ cargoes carried a legacy from Fray Juan’s Manila of 250 years before: to ease their trade with the Chinese, they carried Mexican silver pesos – which, well into the 19th century, was still the preferred means of exchange, long after Mexican Independence had grounded the Manila galleon (Valdés Lakowsky, 1985: 73-81; McMaster, 1959: 372-399; Irigoín, 2009: 215-220).

CONCLUSION

Largely the domain of Europeanists and Asianists, early modern global history presents both promises and pitfalls to scholars of Latin American history. Eurasia-centric global historiography is dense, has provoked lively debates in recent years, and offers a wide array of methodologies, from macro-history and histories of globalization, to microhistorical studies that discover the globe even in the most intimate of settings (Reinhard, 2015; Darwin, 2009; Andrade, 2010; Subrahmanyam, 2011; Brook, 2008). Latin Americanists and scholars of Iberian worlds are only beginning to make their presence felt (Gruzinski, 2010; Lane, 2010). The challenges that lie ahead for Latin Americanists as they engage global history are twofold.

First, global history runs the risk of becoming whiggish, a modernization narrative that seeks to historicize globalization for present audiences. These are narratives of continuous

convergence and integration, a story of globalization's expanding reach over the past five hundred years. "La historia global", Romain Bertrand observes, "rara vez es discontinuista" (Bertrand, 2015: 17). The histories of the Hispano-Asian Pacific reveal global interactions and processes of change that instead move like advancing tides: waves of global history advance, recede, and move sideways in riptides. The worlds of East Asia, maritime Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean interacted with colonial Latin America in transformative ways, often beyond the gaze or regulatory abilities of Iberian or Asian empires. Fragile linkages bound together local histories into a common field of circulation and exchange, and for two centuries these transpacific connections transformed societies throughout the Pacific basin. As quickly as the Hispano-Asian Pacific emerged in the 1560s, by the 1820s the currents had shifted: meanings and priorities changed, routes shifted, and new actors reconfigured and reconnected the points on the map. Told from below, global history is more a series of incomplete advances and accidental crossings than a teleological account of globalization.

The second problem concerns the place that global histories often attribute to early modern Latin American societies. Global historiography situates Latin America at the periphery of Western Europe, its importance firmly anchored in the Atlantic World. Scholarship in colonial Latin American history over the past decades has provided us with a more nuanced vision of how colonial power operated in a state that was limited in its reach. In this context, the Hispano-Asian Pacific world can force a reconsideration of imperial and colonial power. The Pacific world provided for greater autonomy than the Atlantic system because transpacific commerce, missions, and administration were generally handled in Mexico City. For this reason commercial interests in Spain continuously protested against colonial Latin American involvement in the Pacific. Given that global history runs the risk of lapsing into old imperial or Eurocentric narratives, spaces like the Pacific shed light on the ways in which Latin American societies impacted global history not solely with commodities and labor, but also with migration flows, knowledge, and culture.

NOTES

¹ I employ the term 'Latin America' when referring to current scholarly debates and global historiography. As a geo-historical term, 'Latin America' has met with important criticism in recent years. Commonly encompassing the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America, and South America [sometimes including, other times excluding Brazil], historically the term was cast in opposition to Anglo-America. Nonetheless, it is still a useful geographical label that refers to comparable Iberian colonial experiences, bureaucratic-religious institutions, ever-tenuous negotiations and conflicts between colonial regimes and indigenous peoples, and global networks that extended outward to Europe, Africa, and Asia ('East Indies'). Less anachronistic – though no less colonial – is the contemporary term 'West Indies' (*Indias Occidentales/Índias Ocidentais*), which Iberians applied to the American continent.

Most importantly, 'Latin America', like other geo-historical constructions such as 'South Asia' or 'West Africa', is universally recognizable among scholars in other parts of the globe. Ultimately, transoceanic and transnational approaches remind us that geographical conceptions are merely tools of analysis and communication, the starting points of conversations rather than finite containers of history and identity. On the origins and rising usage of 'Latin America' in the nineteenth century, see Mignolo (2011).

2 On 'contact zones', see Mary Louise Pratt (1992: 7).

3 On writing the history of colonial and post-colonial societies from an overseas, global perspective, see Alencastro (2000) and Yokota (2011).

4 John Darwin (2009: 60), for example, writes that the Spanish conquest of Mexico – a process that several generations of Mexicanists have explained in terms of Mesoamerican imperial crises and demographic catastrophes – was "more like science-fiction than history". See also Reinhard (2015) and Bayly (2004).

5 While this paper examines transpacific linkages between the East and West Indies along the Acapulco-Manila galleon line, Portuguese colonies in Brazil were also connected to Asia through maritime routes to Portuguese colonies in Goa, Malacca, Macau, the Moluccas, and Nagasaki. See Amaral Lapa (2000), Muhana (2003: 41-3), Russell-Wood (2001).

6 For a critique of the historiography of early modern globalization, see VRIES, Jan de, The limits of globalization in the early modern world, *The Economic History Review*, vol. 63, no. 3, 2010, 710-733.

7 Dominican records in Manila reveal that in 1668, a native *cabildo* in Pampanga invested in the galleon trade. Archivo Provincial del Sagrado Rosario, Archive of the University of Santo Tomás (APSR-AUST) Consultas vol. 4, f. 84r.

8 Referring to this enormous contraband economy, Bishop Miguel de Benavides of Nueva Segovia (Philippines), stated: "there is nothing to be expected except thunderbolts from heaven to punish what is done." Fray Miguel de Benavides to King Philip II. Manila, 17 May 1599, in Blair and Robertson (vol. 10, p. 94).

9 Romain Bertrand (2015) argues that 'connected history' should be considered separately from 'global history' because this methodology differs from more macro and comparative variants of global history. Yet the synchronicity of 'connected history' could very well help to diversify global history.

10 Juizio del papel escrito en Manila, sobre que no permitan el asiento de los sangleyes en Filipinas. Anon. Dominican ms. Manila, 1677. Archivo de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas – Archive of the University of Santo Tomás (APSR-AUST), Sección Sangleyes, tomo 1, f. 695r.

11 The subcategories that he listed were similar to those in Mexico. Rather dismissively, Gemelli Careri states that his list of *castas* is only a sample: *criollo* (born of a Spanish male and indigenous female), *mestizo* (Spanish female and indigenous male), *castizo* or *tercerón* (born of two mestizos), *quarterón* (Spanish female and black male), *mulato* (Spanish male and black female), *grifo* (black female and mulato male), *sambo* (mulata female and indigenous male), and *capra* (sambo and indigenous).

12 Elison draws from the Japanese Buddhist anti-Christian polemic *Kirishitan Monogatari*. See also the tracts of ex-Christian Buddhist re-converts Fabián Fucán, *Ha Daiusu (Against Dios)* and Suzuki Shosan, *Ha Kirishitan (Against the Christians)*.

13 AUST Libros, vol. 81, f. 231v.

14 The ship hailed from Rhode Island in the newly-independent United States. Arribada de barco de Rodislán, Manila 1793. Philippine National Archives, Galeones, bk. 1 (1693-1809), f. 443.

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