

Reconfiguring Pacific History Reflections from the Pacific Empires Working Group

Jordan Sand

The recent work of many historians of the American West, of Hawai'i and the Pacific islands, of Asian Americans, and of the Japanese and American empires in the Pacific has shown increasing signs of a convergence of interests and concerns. From multiple perspectives, scholars are approaching their subjects more transnationally and, at the same time, challenging received understandings concerning ethnic and national identities, the boundaries and the chronologies of empire, the movements of peoples, and the catastrophic encounters and conflicts of the modern era.

Distinct political events around the Pacific appear to be responsible for the growth of interest in empire. In the United States, this derives partly from the imperial character of U.S. actions around the world since the end of the Cold War, particularly since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.¹ Study of the Japanese empire was spurred in part by democratization during the late 1980s in Taiwan and Korea, and, within Japan, by the collapse of the national narrative of modernization, which had long enabled imperial amnesia.²

Despite the trend toward geographically broader histories, we all enter the discipline from particular national-regional starting points, and no one masters the entire literature of other regional fields. This dynamic moment thus demands greater communication among scholars grounded in the study of different places. It also presents us opportunities to reconfigure fundamentally the regional structures of the discipline.

Constituted within Area Studies in U.S. academic institutions, Japanese history has long remained discrete from Asian American Studies,

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whose origins lay in American Ethnic Studies. When I was studying modern Japan in the 1980s and 1990s, first in an East Asian Studies program, then later in a History department, many of us wanted to keep Asian American Studies at arm's length. We were invested in Japanese language and the national history to which that opened the door. Our "Japan" was thus territorial, making the Japanese diaspora someone else's issue. The irony was that this Area Studies-based territorial bias thrived even as the Japanese empire became the biggest topic in the field. Akira Iriye had long ago pointed out that empire and emigration were linked by a discourse of national expansion in late nineteenth-century Japan.³ Reading Eiichiro Azuma's *Between Two Empires* (2005) made me realize how blinkered by national borders my perspective had been. Azuma's work showed not only that Japanese political elites imagined a link between empire and emigration, but that many of the social and cultural issues in the modern history of the Japanese archipelago were deeply entwined with diaspora.⁴ In my "Modern Japan" survey course, I now include Azuma, along with Jeffrey Lesser's writing on Nikkei in Brazil,⁵ selections from the collection of Japanese writing about America edited by Duus and Hasegawa,⁶ and the remarkable *Four Immigrants Manga*.⁷

In 2015, my colleague Katherine Benton-Cohen and I initiated a working group of scholars trained in the United States and in Japan whose work in various ways has contributed decisively to the history of Pacific empire and migration. At our first meeting, held in May 2015, participants presented research in progress. We were joined by Asano Toyomi of Waseda University, Eiichiro Azuma of the University of Pennsylvania, David Chang of University of Minnesota, Takashi Fujitani of the University of Toronto, Iijima Mariko of Sophia University, Paul Kramer of Vanderbilt University, and Jun Uchida of Stanford University.

A subset of the original group met again in February 2016. This time, we devoted one day to discussion of pedagogical issues and issues of museum collecting and display; reflecting this conversation, some of us will be posting syllabi in *Amerasia* online. We wrapped up with a conversation about the state of the field. The essays printed here contain some of the participants' reflections on the workshop in connection with the issues in their own research. We considered the implications of a history *from* the Pacific versus a *transpacific* history; the political dynamics between Asian Studies and Asian American Studies; how thinking imperially reconfigures the American West and how empire has

been written out of U.S. history; the imperial circuits of knowledge that linked Asian elites to one another and to North America in the early twentieth century; the points of commonality between the U.S. and Japanese empires; and ways to get past the monolithic national narratives of World War II.

Three forms of symbiosis between U.S. and Japanese empires emerged into view. The first was the parallels or commonalities between the two, a subject that gets attention in the essay by Takashi Fujitani included here. Responding to Jun Uchida's paper on a nineteenth-century Japanese imperialist's vision of maritime empire that included colonies of emancipated outcastes,⁸ Paul Kramer pointed out similarities to the maritime expansionism of William Henry Seward as well as to a variety of utopian plans to resettle emancipated slaves outside the United States. In later discussion, it was noted that the U.S.-Japan parallels continued right through the years of the Pacific War, as seen in the symmetry between the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 and the Joint Declaration of the Greater East Asian Conference, held in Tokyo in November 1943.

The second kind of symbiosis can be seen in trajectories of migration and influence linking both imperial powers. Eiichiro Azuma spoke of the importation of American agricultural expertise to the island of Hokkaido on Japan's northern frontier in the nineteenth century, and of a generation of Japanese settlers in California who encountered discrimination and left, but carried a "U.S.-bred settler colonialism" supported by ideas of pioneering and manifest destiny, to the Pacific Islands and Manchuria under Japanese rule. Iijima Mariko presented her research on Japanese laborers in Hawai'i who succeeded in becoming independent coffee planters then tried exporting their business to Japanese-occupied Taiwan. The third area of symbiosis was found in sites of overlapping or layered imperialism. In the context of U.S. historiography, recognition of overlapping imperialism begins with the fundamental shift, pointed to in the working group by Katherine Benton-Cohen, toward seeing the whole history of the American West until the early twentieth century in terms of competing empires and populations, both indigenous and settler, rather than of "native" white majorities and immigrant enclaves. In the very different context of postwar Japan, Asano Toyomi's presentation in our first meeting revealed an imperially layered geography of the Japanese countryside through the complex web of emigration, U.S. technology transfer, and

postwar resettlement plans that underlay the fateful siting of the Fukushima nuclear plant, which was built with General Electric equipment and first commissioned in 1971.⁹

In addition to these links, the working group explored cases that de-essentialize the metropolitan-colonial identity binary. Kramer discussed “class-based exemptions” and the higher-education networks that linked American and Qing elites (as they did Japanese and Taiwanese elites in the Japanese empire), while Chang’s paper presented what he called the “transnational nationalism” seen among Chinese nationalists in Hawai’i in their encounter with Hawaiian royalist independence activists. Chang’s Hawaiian perspective returned our conversation to the fundamental question of indigenous peoples’ experience in an era of competing empires. His contribution here reflects on the historiographic significance of placing indigenous perspectives first.

Observing the layered effects of two empires in the everyday lives of migrants can bring to light historical changes in power and status that would be invisible in a bipolar picture of dominant and subaltern nations. The experience of Okinawans in Hawai’i provides an example. A colonized people and discriminated minority within metropolitan Japan, Okinawans found themselves the objects of continued discrimination when they migrated to Hawai’i. One of the things that marked them apart from majority Japanese migrants was the fact that they kept pigs, which many immigrants from Japan thought were unclean. The U.S. military surge in Hawai’i after the Pearl Harbor attack created huge demand for meat, with the result that some Hawaiian Okinawan pig farmers suddenly became rich. After the war, leaders of the Hawaiian Okinawan community contributed to the recovery of their native islands by sending American pigs to Okinawa, now under U.S. occupation, making them heroes of a humanitarian story that would become known in Hawai’i and Japan. Okinawans in Hawai’i prior to the war had not been unified under a single organization. The United Okinawan Association of Hawai’i was formed in 1951, the product of this process of serving the U.S. military in Hawai’i and providing aid to U.S.-occupied Okinawa after Japan’s defeat. Hawaiian-Okinawan identity thus gained institutional form and became an open source of pride through shifts of fortune due to war and occupation. Every element of this story was precipitated by the extended encounter of Japanese and American empires in the Pacific, the layered social effects of that encounter, and the

changing power dynamics among immigrant communities engendered by geopolitical events.¹⁰

The recent turn toward analysis of imperial spaces and paths of movement in the Pacific has been driven in part by presentist discourses of globalization, which themselves deserve critical unpacking. Yet a more open and multifocal approach has unquestionably helped break the boundaries between national histories. What comes into view as a result is not a history of undifferentiated connectedness—a kind of globalization *avant la lettre*—but new histories of borders,¹¹ of identities forged in encounter, and of the geopolitics of alliance and antagonism determined by configurations of power other than the nation-state.

Notes

Note about names: Japanese names of scholars affiliated with institutions in Japan or publishing principally in Japanese have been given in Japanese order, family name first.

1. See Paul Kramer, "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review* 116:5 (December 2011): 1348-1391; George Steinmetz, "Return to Empire: The New U.S. Imperialism in Comparative Historical Perspective," *Sociological Theory* 23:4 (December 2005): 339-367.
2. Ryuta Itagaki, Satoshi Mizutani, and Hiroshi Tobe, "Japanese Empire," Philippa Levine and John Marriott, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Imperial Histories* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012).
3. Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).
4. Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Trans-nationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also Martin Dusinger, *Hard Times in the Hometown: A History of Community Survival in Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012).
5. Jeffrey Lesser, ed., *Searching for Home Abroad: Japanese Immigrants and Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
6. Peter Duus and Kenji Hasegawa, eds., *Rediscovering America: Japanese Perspectives on the American Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
7. Henry Kiyama, *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924*, Frederick Schodt, trans. (Albany, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 1999).
8. Jun Uchida, "From Island Nation to Oceanic Empire: A Vision of Japanese Expansion from the Periphery," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 42:1 (Winter 2016): 57-90.
9. Yoshimi Shun'ya, "Radioactive Rain and the American Umbrella," Shih-Lin Loh, trans., *Journal of Asian Studies* 71:2 (May 2012): 319-331.

10. Noriko Shimada, "The Emergence of Okinawan Ethnic Identity in Hawai'i: Wartime and Postwar Experiences," *Japanese Journal of American Studies* 23 (2012): 117-138; Jordan Sand, *Teikoku Nihon no seikatsu kūkan* [*Living Spaces of the Japanese Empire*] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2015). On imperial connections between Hawai'i and Okinawa, see Mire Koikari, *Cold War Encounters in U.S.-Occupied Okinawa: Women, Militarized Domesticity, and Transnationalism in East Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
11. Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

Is There the Pacific?

Eiichiro Azuma

Writing an imperial history of the Pacific has been a personal ambition since I was in graduate school. The workshop on Pacific empires allowed me to retrace my intellectual trajectory and ponder the meaning of the Pacific to my research endeavors—past and future. The Pacific can be anything, but I see it primarily as a space where not only research subjects but also researchers themselves travel with all their intellectual baggage and limitations. The former includes the ideas, bodies, capital, goods, nation-states, and empires that were mobile, shifting, and mutable beyond the physical boundaries of landmasses and sovereign political powers. In this case, the Pacific refers to the physical space where research subjects act as transborder historical actors. In a discussion about the Pacific, I suspect most historians would talk about this kind of space, and I felt this was the case at the workshop.

In this essay, I would like to call into question our cartographical act itself, that is, to consider how fundamentally skewed our mapping of the Pacific is. To put this in more general terms, my concern here is to understand how historians of different areas are conditioned to envision a geographically bounded space in particular prescribed ways when they frame their own studies around the theme of the Pacific. I propose to examine a critical but oft-neglected problem that makes the Pacific deficient to serve as a common frame of intellectual dialogue and a paradigm of new research, although I would like to believe that it still carries promise and possibilities.

The challenge of using the Pacific in our research lies not in that paradigm itself but in the different and regimented ways in

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which historians are trained professionally. When I participated in the workshop, I was fascinated by presentations on new research and ensuing conversations that involved U.S.-based Japanologists and Americanists as well as scholars from Japan. But I sometimes struggled to engage in dialogue even though I certainly learned from others' projects and perspectives. I do not consider this to be anybody's fault. It actually mirrors an institutional problem in academia, where the time-honored spatially segmented way of learning artificially breaks up the Pacific into self-contained subunits called Area Studies. (I consider U.S. history as domesticated/nationalized Area Studies in terms of how it is still spatially imagined and organized.) And it is difficult to break out of those institutional and epistemological containers even when we are in the same room discussing the seemingly same question. In order to explain the origins and consequences of this problem, I start with a brief account of my own intellectual trajectory.

During the latter half of the 1990s, I was formally trained at a U.S. institution as a historian of modern Japan, but I was interested in the experience of Japanese migrants and their U.S.-born children, which I felt could not be enclosed within the conventional geographical and epistemological parameters of Japanese or U.S. history. For this reason, my graduate coursework took place as much in the U.S. history contingent as in its East Asian counterpart despite my formal affiliation, because all courses on transpacific "immigration" and Asian "American" experience belonged to the U.S. history curriculum. My research project, and my view of Japanese American history, reflected the way in which I constructed this eclectic scheme of graduate training, where I combined the endeavors to master the historiographies and methodologies of Japanese history and U.S. history concurrently.

My first book, *Between Two Empires*, was a product of that training, where I could bring a divergent set of research *problematicues* from each field into conversation.¹ It was necessary to examine how U.S. and Japanese imperialisms formed an indispensable background for a story of an American ethnic minority that was also deeply entangled in Japan's colonial expansionism. It is tempting to simply call it a "transnational/trans-imperial" history of Japanese Americans. Yet, what is most important is how my own experience had also crisscrossed the spatially-organized fields of historical research in U.S. history and Japanese history as much as my research subjects had traversed the two national-imperial spaces. It is for this reason that I see the Pacific as some-

thing more than a subject of academic research, an analytical or conceptual category, or a matter of scholarly transnationalism. The Pacific is where different fields of academic studies coexist but rarely intersect or interact, thus keeping it fundamentally a segmented space, that is, an assemblage of regionally defined academic turfs for experts in Area Studies/histories.

By drawing on my own combined expertise as a concrete example, I now intend to specifically explicate how the Pacific has been split artificially and institutionally between Asian American history, a branch of U.S. Ethnic Studies, and East Asian history, a part of foreign Area Studies. These two fields of historical study are accomplices in dichotomizing the Northern Pacific into a bounded U.S. space (the eastern half) and an Asian/Japanese space (the western half), where the histories of the American empire and imperial Japan were also set apart as the domains of Americanists and Asianists, respectively. Since the institutionalization of Asian American Studies, it has been generally accepted that Asian American experience is an American story, not a part of Asian history. Spatially speaking, thus, orthodox narratives of Japanese Americans have been detached from the western half of the Pacific and fenced into the eastern half, plus Hawai'i. Although there was and still is a political need for insisting on this nation/hemisphere-centered framing in light of prevailing academic Orientalism, virtually all practitioners of Asian American history are now molded as specialists in modern U.S. history, whose education stays within establish norms of historiographical and methodological training in that field. It is not surprising then that their research is usually devoid of "Asia" or territory west of Hawai'i (with exception of Filipino American history and several noteworthy monographs in the bibliography), because it sits outside their monopolized signature space defined by U.S. sovereignty. And the flipside entails a near complete neglect of Asian American history and the eastern half of the Pacific in Asian Studies circles.

This artificial split of the Northern Pacific is not just a matter of geographic space, however. It has to do with the different sets of scholarly *problématiques* that Asian Americanists and Asianists have developed in their respective fields. As Tak Fujitani argues, the problem of race—one of the key issues that was brought up at the workshop—illuminates significant fault lines between institutions and practitioners of Asian American history and Asian history. On what he calls "the racialized split," Fujitani explains:

[T]he race factor. . .[was] responsible at least in part for the nearly complete inattention of Japanese studies to Asian American issues as matters of intrinsic concern; and for the racialized split that occurred between the two fields of Japanese studies, where most of its practitioners in the immediate postwar decades were white except for a number of Japanese American scholars who. . . were forced to occupy a kind of native informant status, and Asian American studies, in which scholars were overwhelmingly Asian American.²

Indeed, these separate academic fields developed contrasting approaches and analytical styles around the problem of race, especially in relation to the study of empire. Traditionally, Asianists were not nearly as concerned about race as Asian Americanists, who at times looked almost obsessed with it. And even though there are now many Asian Asianists without excessive race consciousness and white Asianists without Orientalist baggage, race remains only one of the many questions that Asianists tend to look at. Contrarily, Asian Americanists—still “overwhelmingly Asian American”—continue to hold race at the center of their inquiry and analysis even when they may couple it with gender, culture, class, and so on. In this sense, the analytics of race accentuate the spatial division of the Pacific that has been sustained by the rift between Area Studies and Ethnic Studies. These gaps reveal more than differences in personal politics or individual perspective; they are institutionally prescribed and maintained. Conversations on race at the workshop—albeit generally productive and stimulating—reminded me of this issue, which I had grappled with since my graduate training, even though the meeting consisted of a pre-selected group of people with marked openness to the question of race.

Thus far, I have discussed how difficult it is for Asian Americanists (or U.S. historians) and Asianists to imagine and talk about the Pacific on similar terms. And I have been only talking about the Northern Pacific. If one lowers one’s gaze to the Central and Southern Pacific, it looks even more complicated and muddled. Here we have Southeast Asian Studies, Pacific Islander/Indigenous Studies, Oceania Studies, and Latin American Studies, to name a few additional fields. They have their own ways of studying the respective spatial territories, as well as their own historiographies and methodologies. And there are many more empires in these segmented sub-regions of the Pacific, which encompasses historians of British, French, German,

Spanish, Dutch, and Chinese imperialisms who all enter with their own baggage.

In this situation, it is hardly possible to argue that the Pacific exists as an integrated space or a common analytical category/ frame, for it is conceptualized, looked at, and studied differently. It essentially remains a plurality of carved-up “worlds,” as Matt Matsuda aptly characterizes it,³ and we do not seem to know how to tie the separate worlds together quite yet. Perhaps, as we tried at the workshop, we may continue with an effort to identify common ground to imagine the disparate Pacific(s) more connectedly. Atlantic history has slavery to do that, for example. What would that be for “Pacific history”? And what would enable us to understand a complex history of entanglements among so many empires and their subjects in the vast ocean and the lands that are in it and surround it?⁴

Notes

1. Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. T. Fujitani, “The Reischauer Memo: Mr. Moto, Hirohito, and Japanese American Soldiers,” *Critical Asian Studies* 33 (2001): 391.
3. Matt K. Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
4. Other recommended work to consider on this topic include: Keith L. Camacho, *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011); T. Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Madeline Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Paul Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2006); Jordan Sand, *Teikoku Nihon no seikatsu kukan* [*Living Spaces of the Japanese Empire*], Amanai Daiki, trans. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2015).

Pacific Empires and the American West

Katherine Benton-Cohen

I am mainly a historian of gender, immigration, and the American West. Obviously, Pacific empires intersect with those interests, as several historians have recently argued.¹ But I had never thought about the field *per se*, although I teach Chinese exclusion and write about the relationship between immigration and foreign policy. I had also written a chapter on the Gentlemen's Agreement for my forthcoming book on the Dillingham Commission of 1907 to 1911, which was my most obvious point of connection with other scholars in the Pacific Empires group. That chapter quotes Japanese immigrant Yamato Ichihashi, who studied and taught at Stanford University in the early twentieth century, and who wrote in 1907, "Bringing these two countries together is the project of my life." Ichihashi embodied the U.S.-Japan relationship in the American West.²

My contributions to the conversation centered mostly around four themes related to teaching: indigenous peoples, comparative empires, World War II, and the language of race and racism. These are important but not parallel themes. I will address each briefly here, returning to some of the remarks I made in the working group.

Indigeneity

David Chang's article "Borderlands in a World at Sea" inspired me to see racial hybridity and colonialism in new ways in the American West.³ Tracing the widespread travels and intercultural relationships of Kanakas, mainland indigenous peoples, and so-

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journing Chinese workers, David uses native languages and genealogy to follow indigenous peoples through empire. He moves far beyond the mere “indigenous people were here” approach (another version of the old “add women and stir” approach to women’s history assailed by Gerda Lerner⁴). The fluidity of indigenous settlement, identity, and tribal recognition are vital issues in the American West’s past and future, and Hawai’i—whose unique racial history has gained more interest as a result of Barack Obama’s political career—helps tell these stories.

Comparative Empires

It is telling that Chang’s article appeared in a special issue on borderlands history, a field that has put comparative empires at its center (see especially Stephen Aron and Jeremy Adelman’s formative 1999 essay “From Borderlands to Borders”⁵). Historians of the colonial era, including Aron in his solo work,⁶ argue that an emphasis on the West as a *region* denies the role of the processes of settlement and the legacies of imperialism. I teach an essay by John Mack Faragher that compares the geography of three colonial villages: the British, with their walled forts; the French, with their small trading centers; and the Spanish, with their mission church squares.⁷ My students understand these different relationships between colonizer and indigenous by seeing how they are mapped on the ground.

In contrast to the colonial era’s comparative empires, a multicultural enclaves model has dominated twentieth-century Western history. Even as this model emphasizes mixture, conflict, and accommodation, power often eludes analysis.

Bringing the comparative empires model into the twentieth century makes Asian migration and settlement much more central to the story of the peopling of the American continent, by introducing Hawai’i and the Pacific into the history of the American West, and by highlighting the Chinese and Japanese peopling of Pacific coast states. But Tak Fujitani’s and Eiichiro Azuma’s insights about the Japanese being both colonized and colonizer also have direct parallels to the Spanish and the American Southwest. *Hispano* people were objects of internal colonialism, but also participated in colonial practices.

Consider again Yamato Ichihashi, one of the first Japanese university students in the United States. As an undergraduate at Stanford, Ichihashi worked as a translator for the Dillingham Commission’s reports on the Japanese. After earning a Ph.D. at

Harvard, he returned to Stanford to teach. In 1932, he wrote a definitive history of Japanese in the United States. But during World War II he and his wife were interned at Santa Anita. Broken and embittered, he never published again. His life embodies the changing relationship between two Pacific empires throughout the twentieth century.

World War II

Yamato Ichihashi's fate brings me to the topic of World War II. As a newcomer to the discussion of Pacific empires, I was fascinated by Fujitani's point that World War II was just a "small blip of time" over the long twentieth century. Paul Kramer pointed out the tremendous similarities between what he called "the U.S. and Japanese projects." With the explosion in federal—especially military—spending, World War II was a major turning point in the American West. It is a central moment in undergraduate courses on the American West, which usually emphasize Japanese internment and sometimes compare it to the reservation system for American Indians. But as Fujitani's observation made clear to me, that approach might need revising, because it emphasizes short-term conflict rather than commonalities over the longer term.

Race and Racism

I want to close with a brief recap of our discussion about the language of race. I almost never use the word "racist" in my teaching; David Chang said he can't teach without it. I understand his point. Our goals are slightly different, and so they take us in different directions. As a historian of race, the central insight I want to get across to my students is that, at its foundation, race is something we made up. I emphasize that race is a social construction, and, thus, so is what counts as racism. For me, the term "racist" both obscures students' ability to think historically, and also, ironically, reifies race. I often point out that lynching, separate drinking fountains, and redlining government mortgages are all racist. But they are not equivalents, and so that label is not very illuminating. Of course there are times in class when I say, "this is racist": there is no other word to put on it. So it's not that I never use it, but that I find it's often not analytically useful.

Instead, I often talk about *racialism*, as a way of saying, yes, people are using a racial system and racial systems are about

power. The uncomfortable truth is that people of the time who actually fought against essentialist racism could *also*, for example, be immigration restrictionists. It's unsettling to say that even people who were fighting against the most virulent forms of scientific racism could also be in some manner nativists. Some, like Elihu Root, even thought the Japanese might be a "superior" race, but feared they were inassimilable. For me, the words "racist" or "racism" occlude those subtleties.

That being said, there is another caveat. In 1913, Yamato Ichihashi wrote a pamphlet in which he offered two concrete recommendations to aid assimilation: get rid of miscegenation laws banning Japanese-white intermarriage and overturn federal laws barring their naturalization. In it, he offered structural revisions of the law.⁸ He understood the power of structures to shape lives and beliefs, but he also naively believed that removing those structures would make racism fall away. He was both right and wrong: As Tak Fujitani remarked, "race and racism are very dense signs." Whatever language we use, this workshop encouraged me to approach the history of the American West in a way that grapples with both the Pacific and its empires.⁹

Notes

1. David Iglar, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Mae M. Ngai, "Western History and the Pacific World," *Western Historical Quarterly* 43:3 (2012): 282-288.
2. For more information, see Yamato Ichihashi Papers, Stanford University Special Collections and University Archives; Yamato Ichihashi, *Japanese in the United States: A Critical Study of the Japanese Immigrants and Their Children* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932; New York: Arno Press, 1969); Gordon Chang, *Morning Glory, Evening Shadow: Yamato Ichihashi and His Internment Writings, 1942-1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).
3. David Chang, "Borderlands in a World at Sea: Concow Indians, Native Hawaiians, and South Chinese in Indigenous, Global and National Spaces," *Journal of American History* 98:2 (September 2011): 384-403.
4. Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
5. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History," *The American Historical Review* 104:3 (June 1999): 814-841.
6. Stephen Aron, "Returning the West to the World," *OAH Magazine of History* 20:2 (March 2006): 53-60.
7. John Mack Faragher, "Americans, Mexicans, Métis: A Community Approach to the Comparative Study of North American Frontiers," William

Cronon, *et al.*, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992): 90-109.

8. Yamato Ichihashi, *Japanese Immigration, Its Status in California* (San Francisco, 1913).
9. Other texts to explore on this topic include: Katherine Benton-Cohen, "Japanese Immigrants and the Dillingham Commission: Federal Immigration Policy and the American West," Bryan Cannon and Jessie Embry, eds., *Immigrants in the Far West: Historical Identities and Experiences* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014): 122-150; Kornel S. Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Pekka Hämäläinen and Sam Truett, "On Borderlands," *The Journal of American History* 98:2 (September 2011): 338-361; Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); "Special Issue: Conversations on Transpacific History," *Pacific Historical Review* 83:2 (May 2014); Paul Sabin, "Home and Abroad: The Two 'Wests' of Twentieth-Century United States History," *Pacific Historical Review* 66:3 (August 1997): 305-335.

A Different Kind of "Asia Pivot"

Takashi Fujitani

Our gatherings at Georgetown stimulated important discussions on a wide range of issues, starting with the question of how we ought to constitute our fields of study and research. David Chang rightly emphasized, for instance, that we must be mindful that our concerns with imperialisms in the Pacific do not lead us to treat the region and its people as simply collateral stories in the larger histories of the metropolitan empires. In this connection, I take heart and have learned from the efforts of such scholars as Setsu Shigematsu and Keith Camacho who have centered the Pacific as a method to reveal and critique the militarization and imperialism that tie together the entire sweep of the U.S., Asia, and the Pacific.¹ Similarly, Yêñ Lê Espiritu's recent book on critical refugee studies traces the overlapping routes of America's supposedly humanitarian rescue efforts and its wars in Southeast Asia across the militarized space of Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and the mainland U.S.² These works and a number of others illuminate how the boundaries of conventional disciplinary and Area Studies formations need to be stretched and sometimes even broken down if we are to make our scholarship politically effective.

Of course, no one of us can do all of this work alone. Even as we learn from one another and strive to chip away at our inadequacies, the discussions left me inspired to continue the research that I feel most able to do now—which is to investigate the comparabilities between the Japanese and U.S. nation-states and empires, while not reducing the colonized Pacific and Asia into epiphenomena of the metropolitan countries, or to ignore the effects

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of imperialism on the “homelands” themselves. Because of the limited space allotted to each of us, I want to use the rest of this commentary to focus on one issue concerning imperialism in the Asia-Pacific—namely, how dominant narratives of the Second World War encourage the minimizing and sometimes complete disavowal of colonialism and imperialism in this region.

Inspired by my collaborations with Geoffrey White and Lisa Yoneyama from many years ago,³ I continue to believe that we will never be able to deal adequately with and have an impact on popular understandings of imperialism in the Pacific and Asia as long as we buy into the American and Japanese exceptionalist myths, which, respectively, regard the Second World War in the Asia-Pacific as a “good war.” This narrative is of course most commonly associated with the United States and its purportedly “greatest generation,” but the same could be said of the right-wing nationalist discourse paradigmatically articulated by Hayashi Fusao, who in the 1960s reaffirmed his wartime stance that Japan’s Great East Asia War was the culmination of a heroic hundred year war against Western imperialism.⁴ To be sure, the American affirmation of the “good war” as a U.S.-led struggle for freedom and democracy throughout the world is a far more dominant national discourse in the U.S. than is its counterpart in Japan. Nonetheless, in Japan, the perceived hypocrisy of the U.S.—which has waged a chain of imperialist wars in Asia and elsewhere while persisting in racist discrimination against its internal and global Others—continues to stoke the rantings of Japanese neo-nationalists who see the Asia-Pacific War as a war of resistance to white imperialism.

Examples of the ways in which the transpacific “good war” narrative has served to occlude or minimize the respective colonialisms and imperialisms of Japan and the U.S. abound. For instance, Ken Burns’s widely viewed public television series *The War*⁵ prominently featured the horrific experiences of American victims of the Japanese invasion of the Philippines, but it did not consider the American colonial rule, which had made it possible for these wealthy settlers to be there in the first place. This parallels the common disregard of Hawai’i’s colonial status at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. The historian Jon Kamakawiwo’ole Osorio shows how recuperating the name of Pu’uloa for the place otherwise known as Pearl Harbor can dramatically shift the meaning of the American military presence in Hawai’i away from narratives of American patriotism and toward recognition of the costs of incorporation into the American empire.⁶

Versions of the Japanese good war narrative, though with nowhere near the dominance of its American counterpart, continue to thrive alongside or just below the surface of official expressions of remorse for Japanese militarism and imperialism. Neo-nationalist historical revisionists, who have, since the 1990s, famously tried to whitewash Japanese war crimes and colonial exploitation from school textbooks, have had many supportive listeners among the conservative political elite in Japan. One of the most prolific and influential purveyors of this celebratory version of Japanese history has been the manga artist Kobayashi Yoshinori, who has produced a stream of manga defending Japan's modern wars and its empire. His major works sell well into the hundreds of thousands and the three volumes making up his *On War* (*Sensōron*, 1998, 2001, 2003) have reportedly sold more than 1.6 million copies.

What I mean to say is that the two incompatible and self-aggrandizing narratives of the "good war," which focus on differences and incommensurabilities between Japan and the U.S., have so colored historical representations and memories of the Asia-Pacific region in the long twentieth century (late-nineteenth century to the present) that it is difficult to recognize that Japan, the U.S., and Britain have almost always been collaborators in exploiting the rest of the Asia-Pacific. And it is only in the relatively brief, if obviously critical, time of the Second World War that the "clash," to use Walter LaFeber's expression,⁷ overrode the much longer and deeper cooperative relationship among these three powers. We need, I think, a different kind of Asia Pivot from the one famously proposed by Hillary Clinton and President Obama—one which helps us remember that the major divergence of interests between peoples in the Pacific and Asia has not been between Japan, on the one hand, and the Anglo-Americans on the other, but rather between the Anglo-American-Japanese alliance and the rest of the Pacific and Asia. It is only in recent years, I would add, that this cozy partnership has had to face the new factor of China as an oceanic empire.

We need to recall that after the Euro-American empires in the mid-nineteenth century forcibly put an end to Japan's and the rest of the Asia-Pacific's freedom not to trade, the Japanese political elite moved swiftly to dissociate their emerging nation-state and empire from the rest of the region and to join the U.S. and Britain in exploiting the area's markets, resources, and people. To be sure, Paul Kramer has convincingly shown how imaginings of racial,

historical, and civilizational bonds tied the Americans and British together in their imperial ambitions.⁸ But while Japan could never join that Anglo-Saxon club as a full member, its leaders cultivated a place for Japan in this alliance of empires despite their repeated experiences of racialized discrimination.

While most of the historical record supporting such a claim is easily accessible to any student of history, almost all American and Japanese patriots, whether historians or their broader publics, seem happy to ignore the long history of their nations' imperialist collaboration. We might start with the commitment of all three empires to the Open Door policy, which promised free access to the markets and resources of China. Japan's leaders committed their nation to this strategem by, for example, contributing the largest number of troops of any nation to put down the anti-imperialist Boxer Rebellion at the turn into the twentieth century. Through informal and formal agreements such as the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the 1905 Taft-Katsura Agreement, the three powers guaranteed to one another that they would maintain stability in East Asia through the recognition of U.S. prerogatives over the Philippines, British rights over India and the Indian border areas, and Japanese control of Korea. Indeed, loans floated by American and British bankers were critical to Japan's ability to emerge victorious in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and achieve dominance on the Korean peninsula. Perhaps less known is the fact that, with the onslaught of World War I, the Japanese military played important roles in ousting Germany from China and even directly supporting British colonialism by helping to put down a major mutiny of Indian soldiers in the British Army in Singapore in 1915.⁹ The post-World War I redistribution of Germany's colonial possessions in New Guinea and Micronesia to Australia and Japan, respectively, and the maintenance of Guam's status as a *de facto* colony of the U.S. further testify to the mutually enabling imperialisms of the British Commonwealth nations, the U.S., and Japan. Not until the Second World War did the Japanese imperialists disavow their ties with the British and U.S. empires. But the former tripartite imperialist alliance was quickly restored in the postwar years, with Japanese leaders offering up resources such as the islands of Okinawa (and the sexual labor of large numbers of Japanese and Okinawans) as part of the U.S.'s empire of bases,¹⁰ which has stretched across the entire globe.

In conversation with Prasenjit Duara's work on Manchukuo,¹¹ I have argued elsewhere that, in the 1930s, U.S. and Japanese lead-

ers began experimenting with new forms of empire that increasingly disavowed formal, if not de facto, colonialism as a strategy for reconstituting their hegemonies in the Asia-Pacific. Japan's establishment of Manchukuo as a formally independent nation-state in 1932 and the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934, which promised independence for the Philippines, were products of the neo-imperialist strategy of establishing nominally independent but actually heavily dependent states whose self-determinations could be both trumpeted as gifts of the respective benevolent empires and yet compromised by these same powers. As a result of winning the war, the U.S. was enabled to perfect this form of empire, while sometimes even emulating the Japanese wartime experiments for empire in China and Manchukuo. While I do not have the space to expand on the details of this argument here, another part of this new imperialist strategy was, with considerable variations, what might be described as decolonization through nationalization—a process that can be seen in the increasing incorporation of Taiwan and Korea into an expanded notion of Japan in the last years of the war,¹² and in the statehoods of Hawai'i and Alaska.

Thus, while the period from the Depression through World War II effected an explosive disruption in the history of the Anglo-American-Japanese imperialist alliance, it provided an opportunity for these same powers to imagine how they might recover from the crisis of capitalism, which had been the underlying reason for the war, while refashioning their empires in what was becoming a postcolonial world. In the meantime, so many local peoples throughout the Pacific, Asia, and elsewhere who had been exploited by these same powers prior to and during the war have continued to pay a high price for their inclusion into this transpacific arrangement, including losing their people to service in the U.S. military out of all proportion to their populations. Soldiers from the U.S.'s insular empire—made up of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands as well as the nominally independent Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands—continue to pay the often deadly price of serving as what Michael Lujan Bevacqua aptly calls the "tip of America's military spear" today.¹³ But this brings us to yet another topic which I can only mention in closing, which is the largely invisible story of colonial soldiers in the Euro-American and Japanese imperial forces who during the long twentieth century have served and died in the wars of the great powers.

Notes

1. Setsu Shigematsu and Keith L. Camacho, eds., *Militarized Currents: Toward a Decolonized Future in Asia and the Pacific* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
2. Y en L  Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
3. T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama, eds., *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
4. Hayashi Fusao, *Dai t a sens  k teiron*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Miki Shob , 1984 [1963-1965]).
5. Sarah Botstein, et al., *The War* (PBS Home Video, 2007).
6. Jon Kamakawiwo'ole Osorio, "Memorializing Pu'uloa and Remembering Pearl Harbor," Shigematsu and Camacho, eds.
7. Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998).
8. Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule Between the British and United States Empires, 1880-1910," *The Journal of American History* 88:4 (March 2002): 1315-1353.
9. Heather Streets-Salter, "The Local Was Global: The Singapore Mutiny of 1915," *Journal of World History* 24:3 (September 2013): 539-576.
10. Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004).
11. Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
12. T. Fujitani, "The Reischauer Memo: Mr. Moto, Hirohito, and Japanese American Soldiers," *Critical Asian Studies* 33:3 (September 2001): 379-402; T. Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
13. Michael Lujan Bevacqua, "The Exceptional Life and Death of a Chamorro Soldier: Tracing the Militarization of Desire in Guam, USA," Shigematsu and Camacho, eds.

Looking at the Pacific from the Pacific

David A. Chang

It seems to me that the crux of the issue in thinking about “Pacific Empires” is spatial definition and perspective. What do we talk about when we talk about the Pacific and its history? In my mind, it is essential to center the Pacific, its islands, and its peoples—especially its indigenous peoples—in the history of the region. Whether our goal is to understand Pacific Islanders or empires in the Pacific, we must look *at* the Pacific *from* the Pacific, rather than look at it only from the outside. If we can do this, we will not only understand the Pacific Ocean and Pacific Islanders better, we will have a firmer and more grounded understanding of the empires and global processes with which Pacific Islanders have engaged.

In saying this, I speak from my own work in Native Hawaiian history, but I also echo the words of many scholars who work in Pacific Islander history more broadly. Perhaps most important among these has been the great Epeli Hau’ofa. Contemporary Pacific Studies proceeds from the basis of Hau’ofa’s eloquent insistence that we remember that the Pacific is “our sea of islands.”¹ The phrase is a rebuke to those who would portray the ocean as a near-empty “waste” marked only by isolated specks of land. It posits the Pacific instead as an oceanic world dense with meaning and knit together with the webs of connection and movement among its many islands.

The need to center the Pacific in the study of Pacific history might seem rather obvious, but as Noenoe K. Silva has argued from the perspective of Hawaiian history, much of the literature suggests that this has long not been the case.² The literature on the region has often most prominently focused on the history of empires (both formal and informal) and settlers, and not on Pa-

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cific societies themselves, let alone native Pacific Islanders. Unless new scholarship confronts this tendency directly, it might simply replicate the colonialism of the old scholarship. In other words, there is a real risk that a new kind of “Pacific world” history will sacrifice an understanding of the Pacific in a rush to make a big splash in world history.

I don’t think that looking at the Pacific from the Pacific means ignoring the ways that outside empires, colonial powers, and economies have made themselves major forces in the Pacific. Nor does it mean ignoring the active engagement of Pacific Islanders with the rest of the world—the issue that energizes the heart of my own research. These connections are fundamental to the past two centuries of Pacific history, and must claim our attention.

In our Pacific Empires Working Group, two terms that came up a lot were “transpacific history” and, of course, “Pacific empires.” While I understand the appeal of both terms (why *not* study the Pacific as a whole? Why *not* focus on empires in such a heavily colonized area?), I think these terms lead us in the wrong direction. Transpacific literally refers to crossing the Pacific or something that includes both edges of the Pacific. It seems likely to me that “transpacific history” will focus on the continents that fringe the ocean at the expense of what is in the middle: the Pacific itself. After all, a transpacific flight is about soaring over the ocean and its islands in jetliner comfort. Similarly, transpacific history might mean leaping over the history, islands, and people of the Pacific. The result is the kind of “erasure” of the Pacific and Pacific Islanders that Lisa Kahaleole Hall identifies in her work.³ Similarly, the term “Pacific empires” seems like a misnomer to me. We wouldn’t consider the British, French, Portuguese, and other European empires to be “African empires” even though they once claimed most of that continent. Similarly, we risk a misreading if we define the Japanese and the American empires to be “Pacific empires” rather than Asian and North American empires that operated (and operate still) in the Pacific. Of course, Japan actually lies within the Pacific. But the pairing of its empire with that of the U.S. is revealing. The understanding here is about empires in the Pacific, rather than the Pacific itself.

This is not a mere linguistic quibble, and I hope it does not seem churlish. As Takashi Fujitani and Paul Kramer usefully pointed out in our conversation, these linguistic matters speak to the heart of how we proceed as scholars. Pacific histories should emerge from the Pacific as a region rather than only from its conti-

mental fringes. Otherwise, we could fall into the mistake of thinking that it was colonialism or imperialism that created the Pacific as a coherent region, which would be a fundamental error. The regional identity of the Pacific emerges from a deep history of migration and movement and connection among Pacific peoples on hundreds of islands and dozens of archipelagos stretching from Australia in the southwest to Rapa Nui (Easter Island) in the southeast to Hawai'i in the north. The Pacific thus encompasses peoples that colonial ethnography cut up into the often arbitrary and racist categories of Melanesian, Malayan, Polynesian, and Micronesian: people who for all their differences often share commonalities of language, practice, material culture, and belief.

Nothing more powerfully emblemizes the deep historical rootedness of the region than the ocean-going canoe. As Vicente M. Diaz emphasizes, this is the form of watercraft that led to the peopling of these many islands and made possible the travels that knit islands and archipelagos together in the region.⁴ The revival of long-distance non-instrumental canoe navigation in the late twentieth century has been a powerful sign to Pacific Islanders that their region derives its identity from a very old history of movement and communication across a sea of islands, not just from colonial impositions over the past two centuries.

Here, Alice Te Punga Somerville's book *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* comes to mind.⁵ This is a literary study, but it has a lot to teach historians about reasserting the depth and extent of the intra-Pacific connections that precede and exceed colonial boundaries. It's about deep histories of movement of people, of stories, of languages, and of objects, through vast space. I think that it captures the spirit of a lot of us who are doing Pacific Studies from an indigenous-centered point of view. It really helps us understand *ka moana*, the ocean, as a place of movement and of history, rather than as a static space where history was created by the intervention of outside imperial forces.

From this basis, we can focus on the global connections of the Pacific without obliterating the active role of Pacific Islanders in this process. In my own work, I emphasize that Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians) were active participants in the making of these connections from the moment Captain Cook stumbled upon their islands in 1778. They explored the globe directly via travel, studied it intensely through reading in Hawaiian and foreign languages, used a variety of Christian and Native Hawaiian religious and spiritual traditions to explore the place of *mana* (sa-

cred power) in world geography, wrote extensive works describing global geography, and made families and intimate ties and alliances with Westerners, Asians, American Indians, African Americans, and especially other Pacific Islanders. In all these ways and more, Native Hawaiians vigorously explored the outside world and pursued connection to it. There is every reason to believe that similar stories can be told about societies all across the sea of islands. Looking at the Pacific from the Pacific means understanding global processes and empire and colonialism more deeply and in a more grounded way without turning some participants in that history—notably indigenous people—into passive victims of history.

One of the greatest problems with old-style imperial history was that it treated the imperial perspective as an objective perspective. In fact, the putatively objective stance of the disinterested scientist actually reproduced the perspective of the powerful imperial outsider. This is what critical geographer Karen Piper calls “the view from nowhere”—a stance that legitimates the power of the scientist by obscuring the fact that he or she is (most often) viewing the world from a privileged position within the Western academy.⁶ If we jump straight from old-style imperial history to new-style Pacific World history (as a subset of world history), we don’t really avoid this danger. We take on the view from nowhere. We adopt a view from 10,000 feet that shows us depersonalized flows of capital and population and resources and leads us toward a kind of high world history in which hapless and isolated Pacific Islanders were at the mercy of Great Powers and the grand narratives of outside empires—a cartoonish and colonialist image of the past. The solution to this is to look at these processes from an explicit view from somewhere: to look at the Pacific from the Pacific.⁷

Notes

1. Epeli Hau’ofa, “Our Sea of Islands,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 6:1 (1994): 148-161.
2. Noenoe K. Silva, *Aloha Betrayed: Native Hawaiian Resistance to American Colonialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
3. Lisa Kahaleole Hall, “Strategies of Erasure: U.S. Colonialism and Native Hawaiian Feminism,” *American Quarterly* 60:2 (June 2008): 273-280.
4. Vicente M. Diaz, “Voyaging for Anti-Colonial Recovery: Austronesian Seafaring, Archipelagic Rethinking, and the Re-mapping of Indigeneity,” *Pacific Asia Inquiry* 2 (2011): 21-32.

5. Alice Te Punga Somerville, *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.)
6. Karen Piper, *Cartographic Fictions: Maps, Race, and Identity* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002.)
7. Other texts that address the issues raised in this piece include Ben R. Finney, *Sailing in the Wake of the Ancestors: Reiving Polynesian Voyaging* (Honolulu: Bishop Museum Press, 2004); David Lewis, *We, the Navigators: The Ancient Art of Landfinding in the Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

“Pacific Empire” as a Useful Analytical Category

Jun Uchida

To scholars of empire like myself, the task of situating Japan in the history of the Pacific is long overdue. Indeed, one may point to a “continental bias”¹ in the historiography on Japanese empire, which has devoted the lion’s share of its attention to the continent while largely neglecting the South Pacific or the Nan’yō (“South Seas”).² Even less acknowledged is the flow of emigrants to Hawai’i and the Pacific Coast regions of America as part and parcel of Japan’s “overseas expansion”—what Eiichiro Azuma (2005) has called “transpacific eastward expansionism.”³ One of the advantages of conceptualizing Japan as a Pacific empire, then, is to redress this imbalance in Japanese historians’ understanding of national expansion. Japan’s empire, in fact, had multiple vectors—continental, maritime, as well as transpacific—and involved a variety of processes, from trade and shipping to migration and settlement, in which imperialism was but one strategy.⁴ The study of Japanese engagement with the Pacific must, at the same time, begin with an awareness that it had a deeper chronology than the rise of imperialism in the late nineteenth century. Meiji proponents of empire, for instance, often evoked the medieval adventures of Japanese merchants, warriors, and seafarers in the South Pacific as a source of inspiration for an “indigenous tradition of expansionism,” while spreading the new notion of Japan as an “oceanic nation,” with deep cultural roots in the Pacific.⁵

While the concept of Pacific empire is thus useful for rethinking Japanese expansion, its greatest utility perhaps lies in bringing the United States into analytical purview. The Spanish-American War of 1898 and its aftermath (including the annexation of Hawai’i and colonization of Guam and the Philippines)

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transformed the United States into a two-ocean empire, looking to the Pacific as well as to the Atlantic. Yet scholars have seldom compared the Pacific face of this empire with its rival, Japan. In the standard narrative of World War II, the two countries often appear as irreconcilable foes locked in a battle between liberalism and fascism. This view has come under scrutiny since the 1980s, when Iriye Akira (1981)⁶ and John Dower (1986)⁷ showed that Japan and the United States were not as ideologically opposed as had often been assumed, whether in their prewar commitment to liberalism or in their wartime conduct of racism. More recently, the notion of their incommensurability has been completely overturned by Takashi Fujitani (2011),⁸ who argues that it was not simply racism but its disavowal that drove both wartime regimes in the Asia-Pacific.

To identify the common logic and technologies of rule over their subpopulations is one way to reexamine the link between Japan and the United States as imperial formations. Another might be to trace the intersecting flows of people, knowledge, goods, and capital between the two empires—Pacific crossings that fueled their economic and cultural exchange as well as imperial competition. Still another might be to focus on those spaces in the Pacific mutually shaped by the two powers, such as Okinawa, Hawai'i, and California, and examine the variety of local responses and engagements they generated.

One of these spaces in the imperial Pacific that particularly interests me is colonial Davao, located on the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines. My current research involves a study of Japanese abaca planters, who migrated to Davao in droves during the World War I boom and steadily expanded control over the local economy, even as they operated under the U.S. colonial government. The story of abaca production in Davao not only captures the commensurability of Japan and the United States, but even illustrates their "collaboration" or partnership in resource exploitation in the South Pacific. Not unlike the case of Hawai'i in the Meiji period, colonial Davao became the interface between the two empires, where the U.S. colonial government tacitly supported Japanese abaca plantations as a key source of revenues and employment for Filipino migrants, from the mid-1920s through the outbreak of World War II.⁹

In response to nationalist pressure, the colonial government did enact laws to restrict Japanese land ownership and investment—measures interpreted by one powerful Japanese planta-

tion owner as an overseas extension of “Japanese exclusion” in the United States to the Philippines.¹⁰ But once the Japanese had proven themselves to be more successful than American and European planters, colonial officials largely refrained from interfering in their activities, in order “to ensure a steady supply of cheap and high quality hemp” for American cordage manufacturers.¹¹ For their part, the Japanese planters successfully defended their lands by exploiting legal loopholes, wooing the influential Filipino elites,¹² and pressuring the colonial authorities through the Japanese consulate.¹³ The American policy of “non-interference” toward these immigrants also had the effect of promoting the Japanese “colonization” of Davao. By 1941, their population in Davao had reached a total of 20,000, constituting the largest Japanese community in Southeast Asia—“Davao-kuo,” as it was often called by Japanese settlers.¹⁴

The records of their plantation activity allow a glimpse of awareness among immigrants that they operated not only at the forefront of Japan’s southern empire, but at the nexus of two Pacific powers, a complex space where a Japanese diaspora developed through conflict and cooperation with a variety of local forces (Filipino nationalists, politico-economic elites, the Bagobo “tribes,” American officials) under the jurisdiction of a foreign colonial regime. The colonization of Davao was further complicated by the preponderance of Okinawans—who were part of a larger Okinawan labor diaspora in the Nan’yō¹⁵—and their tension with immigrants from the Japanese mainland. To trace the flow of labor migrants from Okinawa to Davao is to connect one colonial periphery to another, where the two empires of Japan and the United States met and collided. The experience of Okinawan migrants would, indeed, offer another critical lens through which to explore the transpacific entanglements of the two empires.

Notes

1. In response to such a bias, William Tsutsui has shown how Japan extended control over the western Pacific Ocean through exploitation of offshore fisheries—what he calls a “pelagic empire.” See William Tsutsui, “The Pelagic Empire: Reconsidering Japanese Expansion,” Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker, eds., *Japan at Nature’s Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013).
2. In the early Meiji period, the South Pacific rather than the continent dominated the Japanese colonial discourse, culminating in a call for southern

- advance (*nanshin*). See Mark R. Peattie, *Nan'yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988); Iriye Akira, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1994).
3. Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
 4. Hirose Reiko, *Kokusui shugisha no kokusai ninshiki to kokka kōsō: Fukumoto Nichinan o chūshin to shite* (Tokyo: Fuyō Shōbō Shuppan, 2004): 22.
 5. Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 18; Jun Uchida, “From Island Nation to Oceanic Empire: A Vision of Japanese Expansion from the Periphery,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 42:1 (Winter 2016): 57-90.
 6. Iriye Akira, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).
 7. John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993, c1986).
 8. T. Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).
 9. Patricio N. Abinales, “Davao-kuo: The Political Economy of a Japanese Settler Zone in Philippine Colonial Society,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, 6:1 (Spring 1997): 66.
 10. Furukawa Yoshizō, *Dabao kaitakuki* (Tokyo: Furukawa Takushoku, 1956): 481.
 11. Shinzo Hayase, “American Colonial Policy and the Japanese Abaca Industry in Davao, 1898-1941,” *Philippine Studies* 33:4 (Fourth Quarter 1985): 511, 516-517.
 12. Lydia N. Yu-Jose, “World War II and the Japanese in the Prewar Philippines,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27:1 (March 1996): 73.
 13. Abinales, 77-78
 14. *Ibid.*, 59. For an overview of the Japanese community in Davao, see Ōno Shun, “‘Dabao-kuo’ no Nihon teikoku hen'nyū to hōjin imin shakai no hen'yō,” Araragi Shinzō, ed., *Nihon teikoku o meguru jinkō idō no kokusai shakaigaku* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 2008); Reiko Furiya, “The Japanese Community Abroad: The Case of Prewar Davao in the Philippines,” Saya Shiraishi and Takashi Shiraishi, eds., *The Japanese in Colonial Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, 1993).
 15. See Tomiyama Ichirō, “The ‘Japanese’ of Micronesia: Okinawans in the Nan'yō Islands,” Ronald Y. Nakasone, ed., *Okinawan Diaspora* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 57-70; Edith M. Kaneshiro, “‘The Other Japanese’: Okinawan Immigrants to the Philippines, 1903-1941,” Nakasone, ed., 71-89.

A Complex of Seas

Passages between Pacific Histories

Paul A. Kramer

By 1889, Salt Lake City had embarked on its rocky career as the eastern hub of Oceania. The Mormons had first landed in Hawai'i in the 1850s, reaching across the Pacific from their missions to California's mining camps. They failed among Euro-Americans in the Islands, and turned their attention to Native Hawaiians, learning their language, converting leaders and establishing plantation settlements enabled by new laws allowing foreign land ownership. For Native Hawaiians, Mormon faith and agricultural settlements aided the preservation of communal beliefs and practices in the context of rapid, dislocating change, including those brought by Mormon newcomers themselves. In the absence of a temple in the Pacific, converts crossed the ocean and traveled overland to Utah, settling in the Warm Springs area of North Salt Lake City. In doing so, they fulfilled the Mormon aspiration to "gather" at the center of the Kingdom of God in what they called Mauna Pohaku (Rocky Mountains); their journeys were also continuous with historically deep Hawaiian journeys of discovery, trade, and labor that spanned the Pacific, including the western edges of the imperial United States.

Gathered into a racially stratified American West, the Hawaiian arrivals were socially and economically subordinated. In 1889, following a Utah court decision barring Hawaiians from citizenship, church leaders established a separate mission community for them in desolate, sun-scorched Skull Valley, 75 miles southeast of the city, where they worked for a church-owned agricultural company that paid them in credit. They called the town—228 souls at its peak, including a small number of Samoan, Māori, and Tahiti-

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tian converts—Iosepa, Hawaiian for Joseph, after Joseph F. Smith, one of the first Mormon missionaries to the Islands. Most of the converts returned to Hawai'i after 1917, with the raising of a Mormon temple there, and helped spread Mormonism in the Islands.¹ Meanwhile, early Hawaiian settlement in Utah paved the way for Salt Lake City's emergence, by the early twenty-first century, as the American city with the highest per capita concentration of Pacific Islanders outside of Honolulu, a metropolitan area simultaneously and inseparably in the American West and the Hawaiian East.

Mormon Hawaiian migrations, and the larger transits in which they are enmeshed, raise profound questions about how historians frame the Pacific, spatially, geographically, narratively, and epistemologically. As others have argued, the Pacific Ocean presents unique challenges and opportunities for those seeking to rethink history "beyond the nation," as the world's single largest physical feature, an immense water hemisphere containing over 25,000 islands, tremendous ecological diversity, and a staggering array of human adaptations, socio-political formations, and cultural interactions, collisions, and crossings.²

The writing of "Pacific" history has a long lineage, but has emerged with heightened self-consciousness in recent years, fueled by journalistic and policy discourse surrounding "Pacific Rim" capitalism in general and the rise of China in particular, the aspirational model of "Atlantic history," and broader impulses towards transnational and global scholarship. As our conversations revealed, these histories spring from disparate origins, and approach the Pacific from within distinct intellectual traditions in terms of subject, method, politics, and conceptualization. The Pacific does different interpretive work in each of them. They unfold across different terraqueous spaces: rim and island, North Pacific and South Pacific. There are histories *of* the Pacific, histories *in* the Pacific, and histories *across* the Pacific. Fernand Braudel's compelling description of the Mediterranean as "a complex of seas" pertains equally well not only to the Pacific Ocean but to its historiographies: increasingly extensive, varying in depth, possessing imagined unities and uncertain edges.³

Precisely because an oceanic scope is often cast as a generative alternative to nationalized histories, it is worth emphasizing that that oceans—like nations, regions, continents, and localities—are historical constructions. Oceanic boundaries may be especially difficult to denaturalize because their foundational referent is a

seemingly self-evident fact of “nature”; for this reason, oceans are susceptible to reification, even as other spatial categories are becoming more contingent. (In the Pacific case, a rhetorical stress on the “rim” may in part index the frustrated hope of bounding a gargantuan phenomenon that by definition defies containment.) The South Pacific’s eastern border, for example, stretches along the meridian of Cape Horn, from Tierra del Fuego to Antarctica, according to the International Hydrographic Organization, but the Pacific Ocean, and the “adjacent” Atlantic, evidently do not respect this invisible line. And to what extent does “Southeast Asia,” enfolded in smaller seas, belong to Pacific history? The obvious point of a single, unbroken world ocean points to less obvious, but necessary cautions: the need to resist taken-for-granted definitions of the Pacific (which may fall back on problematic conventions); a self-awareness about one’s criteria for macro-geographic placement; and the need for oceanic histories to open out onto global histories, a task that environmental-historical approaches are currently in a unique position to undertake.⁴

What these varied Pacific histories share, to greater and lesser degrees, is their grappling with the enduring imprint of Euro-American and East Asian empire projects on modern historical imaginaries of the Pacific. As a function of European and later American and Japanese geopolitics, the Pacific was charted as an emptied space of possibility, where unwanted settlers and industrial goods could be projected, sexual and racial constraints escaped, and historic destinies fulfilled. As a constitutive component of these oceanic frontier ideologies, Pacific Islanders were diminished: geographically isolated, temporally backward, historically static, politically fragmented, culturally heathen, and requiring the forces of rim-oriented capital, settlement, technology, and culture to insert them into irresistible currents of evolutionary time.⁵

In what follows, I’ll identify three overlapping clusters of Pacific historical scholarship, identifiable by their subjects, concepts and politics: indigenist histories, critical empire histories, and connectionist histories. Of the three, indigenist histories wrestle most intimately and deliberately with the legacies of rim-centered, imperial knowledge production. This work seeks both to reconstruct the complexity and dynamism of Islander cultures, politics, and history, and, implicitly and explicitly, to challenge and overturn the racist presumptions of colonizer history, past and present. Rather than being “discovered” by Europeans, Is-

landers were discoverers; far from “isolated” by the Pacific’s vast distances, they were its most adept navigators; rather than passive subjects and victims of Euro-American and Japanese power, they resisted outside impositions and, even where they failed to defeat them, shaped and bounded them. Much indigenist scholarship confidently defines itself in relation to the contemporary politics of sovereignty as they play out in questions of land ownership, political autonomy, and cultural pluralism. Scarcities of traditional, academic-historical primary sources and a sovereignty politics that extends to questions of historical epistemology have led some indigenist scholars to qualify or reject Western-derived notions of historical authority predicated on written texts and academic professional culture, and to uphold oral tradition and histories generated by and for Island peoples themselves.⁶ The risks here—romanticisms countering racist condescension; the minimizing of intra-Islander conflict; historiographic self-enclosure; usable pasts built to suit contemporary, postcolonial needs—have not prevented this field from posing trenchant, necessary challenges to Pacific history’s foundational trajectories.

A second historical enterprise can be usefully identified as critical empire histories. Emerging especially among historians of the U.S. and Japan, and Ethnic and Cultural Studies scholars from the 1990s forward, this scholarship contends with nation-centered frames and nationalist politics by foregrounding the central role of Pacific empire—colonial seizure, inter-imperial war, nuclear violence, military basing, and tourist commodification, for example—to metropolitan state-building, social structures, and nationalist ideologies.⁷ Taking nationalist blinders and apologetics as their targets, they have successfully shown Pacific empire to be a core component of modern, military industrial state-building, in the U.S., Japan, and Europe, while both undermining and historicizing imperial, exceptionalist claims of benevolence and self-defense. Their research has mapped empire-builders’ internal tensions, the contingencies of colonial and military projects on the ground, colonizers’ encounters with the worlds of Islanders, and the racialized and gendered ideologies that organized them. Methodologically, these works draw from colonial and postcolonial scholarship, and culturalized modes of diplomatic and military history, and bring to bear American, Japanese, and European archival, linguistic, cultural, and historiographic competences. While sympathetic to and aligned with Islander claims, this work is primarily oriented towards

problematizing historical and ongoing expressions of nationalist and imperialist power originating elsewhere. Its occupational hazards include scholars' unwitting narrative or analytical reproduction of colonizer tropes—into which they necessarily immerse themselves—and negligent or schematic attention to Islander histories, relative to the project of metropolitan critique.

A third mode of scholarship is what I'll call connectionist: its primary object is to establish that histories previously thought to be separate have been mutually imbricated. This work can be divided into two subsets. The first flies under the banner of global and transnational history. It hopes to bring global-historical techniques to Pacific history and vice versa, and to ultimately integrate the Pacific into global history's narratives and analyses.⁸ On a smaller scale, it seeks to demonstrate that national states and subnational regions (like the U.S. West) have Pacific linkages that conventional units of history have obscured.⁹ A second connectionist variant involves transnationalizing efforts within Asian American and Pacific Islander history and Ethnic Studies. Over the past generation, scholarship previously directed towards demonstrating the presence, importance and contribution of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders with respect to U.S. national history has turned its attention to these communities' durable, dynamic connections to "home" societies; their complex, often fraught navigations of socio-political membership between states; and continuities as well as ruptures in their culture and social organization.¹⁰ Both of these sets of literatures, by rescaling and reframing historical research, have raised to the surface previously submerged dynamics, in often transformative ways. But they also come with some risks: the more integrative and "global" the frame, the more Islander histories tend to recede. There is also the serious danger of valorizing cross-national connection for its own sake, whether in the name of historical actors' authenticity and resistance to Western power or, at one level of remove, in celebration of historians' own cosmopolitan, globe-trotting imaginations. Given this work's sometimes heavy reliance upon the conceptual armature of "globalization"—flows, networks, exchanges—it is not surprising that it often shares its aggressively political anti-politics of transnational and global connectivity.

To what extent, if at all, do these far-flung, transnational histories of the Pacific flow into each other? The obstacles here are formidable. Not unlike the Pacific Ocean itself, the fault lines run

deep. There are complicated asymmetries of power, resources and prestige separating rim and island academic systems, which result in highly uneven distributions of intellectual authority when it comes to basic historical agendas, methods, and epistemologies: What history is good for, whose histories matter, and whose ways of telling history count? These Pacific histories are organized within diverse historiographies and require varied cultural competences, especially language. In the U.S. academic setting, enduring, structural tensions remain between Area Studies approaches that foreground Asian-Pacific language, culture, and history, understood in regional terms, and Ethnic Studies approaches that foreground questions of Asian American and Pacific Islander agency and questions of racialized power and its contestation, understood in largely or exclusively within a U.S. national context. The former stand accused of Cold War complicities and Orientalist tropes, the latter of over-attention to American exclusions and inattention to Asian-Pacific histories.

While national parameters continue to pose significant imaginative and practical challenges, so too do the equally imposing, if far less recognized, barricades between transnational projects themselves. The fact that contemporary postcolonial historians, international historians, labor historians, and immigration historians, for example, share a defining opposition to nationalized history does not mean that they will feel any need to undertake the difficult work of talking with each other. In place of a world of nationally containerized histories, one can envision a world of methodologically containerized transnational histories, encased in walls their practitioners hardly know are there.

Thankfully, resourceful historians are clambering over, digging under, and punching holes through these walls even as they consolidate, creating the conditions of possibility for richer conversations between Pacific histories, even if their inventions are sometimes, at least initially, hard to fix on a map. Each in its own way breaks intractable rim/center divides. Taken as a whole, this might be called history at the interstices; it cuts across not only inherited geographic divides, but also sub-disciplinary, thematic, and methodological ones. Such scholars are writing the histories of restless Pacific “natives” voyaging to what for many may be unexpected destinations in metropolitan rims and peripheries (including Utah). They are demonstrating the ways that Islander history and agency shaped the particular contours taken by imperial rim powers in the Pacific as they sought to impose their

will from the “outside.” They are uncovering the role of nationally minoritized peoples, such as Japanese Americans, as agents of colonial, military, and commercial empire in the Pacific, as well as its victims. They are revisiting the lives of East and Southeast Asian laborers in Pacific Islands as vulnerable, sometimes rebellious plantation workers, as well as settler-outsiders, both mixing with and pressures on indigenous worlds. They are looking at Asian exiles and revolutionaries who sought escape, refuge, and stepping stones to the United States in Island spaces. And they are enlisting the tools of environmental history, labor history, and political-economic history to make sense of the invention of commodities from Pacific ecologies (fish, whale oil, guano, and pineapple, for example) and their entanglement with oceanic, rim, and ultimately global cultures and economies.¹¹

Three particular moves and sensibilities make this work possible. First is a critical awareness of the inherited geographic frames of dominant scholarship, and a curiosity about not only their obvious holds on historical practice, but their more subtle ones.¹² Second is the courage to rebel against the not-so-soft power of job descriptions, graduate seminars, journal titles, and professional associations as they impart spatial and geographic categories—including oceanic ones—within which the historical imagination is supposed to legitimately and exclusively pool. Third, and enabled by the first two, are inquiries into how historical actors themselves conceived of, practiced, and struggled over their own position and mobility. What were their compass points? How did they define “home” and “away”? What power did they have to direct their movements, and what boundaries mattered? How for them did Utah and Hawai‘i, Guam and Tokyo, Samoa and Kwajalein, Sydney and Nauru, fit together? Did they bring nationalized identities with them, or did they find or place themselves between national polities? One might think of these moves as displacements that track historical actors’ mobilities, activities, and modes of identification beyond conventional frames, while prying places and spaces out of inherited geographic grids.

Ultimately, this work both requires and enables a larger, much-needed revision: the deconstructing of the rim/island divide itself. It is not at all surprising that this particular way of splitting the world came to organize Pacific historical scholarship: it mapped neatly if inadvertently onto the racialized geographies of older, imperial histories; it came loaded with the discursive cachet of 1990s “rim-speak”; it offered a loose, regionally-

specific, technocratic substitute for the sharper, more analytically supple dialectic between metropole and colony. It also tended to homogenize spaces that needed disaggregating, and left important questions unasked. When it came to islands, weren't there key differences in the way inland and mountain peoples, lowland and littoral peoples, fronted the Pacific? And when it came to rims, how far from the ocean did they stretch? In the North American context, for example, were the United States and Canada themselves rim societies, or just their Pacific Coasts? Did California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia form a single, coherent rim, or were their engagements with the Pacific different enough to situate them along meaningfully different rims? The reconstruction of historical subjects and dynamics that are impossible to fully situate on rims or islands—where did Mormon Hawai'i fit?—may ultimately dislodge this geographic dichotomy and even allow its historicization, which may, in turn, reduce its formidable sway.

That these modes of Pacific history are hard to square and, to some degree, incommensurable does not mean that they are not all essential, as are the tensions between them. Historians would do well to embrace the necessity of navigating what will ideally remain a "complex of seas." Not unlike the Pacific Ocean itself, might Pacific historiography be the site of proliferating intellectual trade languages, born precisely where distant currents collide and intermingle? The goal here would not be a single, authoritative map, an ocean into which rivers inevitably flow, or a language into which all others must be translated, but an unpacified Pacific capable of sustaining a reef's wild multitudes.

Notes

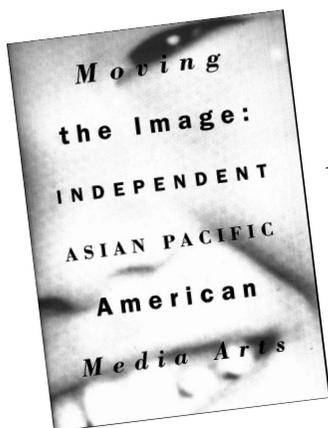
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