

Looking Eastward:  
Pacific and Global Perspectives  
on American History in the Nineteenth  
and Early Twentieth Centuries

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In the transnational reappraisal of the American past going on today, much of the emphasis has been placed upon Atlantic history. Though clearly modified by the American environment, American culture has roots in western civilization, and in the political and religious institutions of Britain. The revolt against Britain was part of a wider struggle to achieve republicanism but it did not break trans-Atlantic ties. Rather, it extended them, to use the term of R. R. Palmer, through the Age of the Democratic Revolutions.<sup>1</sup> The strength of economic and cultural ties with Europe in the nineteenth century continued this trans-Atlantic attachment. American historians responded to these realities by focusing initially on European connections when considering history beyond the nation's borders. The scholarly apparatus of professional history reinforced this frame of reference. Historians were originally trained in the scientific method derived from German scholarship. Leading historians of the first generation in the United States often studied in Germany—or England—in the 1870s to 1900. Aside from American history, the major area of historical specialization continued for many years thereafter to be European history. American college students studied western

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civilization rather than world history in the 1920s, and dialogue between European and American history remained strong. Asian history was under-developed, though Latin American history was beginning to make a stronger impression by the 1930s. Post-World War II Eurocentrism was reinforced by academic specialization, with the cordoning off of area studies, such as Asian Studies in the 1950s and 1960s, not to mention the rise of a social history requiring close attention to local places rather than transnational connections.<sup>2</sup> All this is now changing, however. Attention to the Pacific as a framework for studying world history is growing, and the need to examine the Pacific as “oceanic history” is acknowledged, but the implications for transnational approaches to American history need greater attention than hitherto.<sup>3</sup>

The Pacific does provide a new perspective on American history.<sup>4</sup> Several key issues centre on immigration, strategy, reform movements, and trade. These matters show not only that the Pacific was, in its own right, as early as the nineteenth century, an important field of American endeavour shaping the nature of American history. Considering the Pacific does more than that: it recasts our understanding of American history as a whole. Whereas American historians have approached this topic from the point of view of the Atlantic *versus* the Pacific, American involvement in the Pacific in the nineteenth century was part of a global outlook, not just a regional one. Adding the Pacific and the Atlantic perspectives together produces in the end something much more exciting: a new way of conceptualizing American history as a whole.

What constitutes the Pacific is the first issue. The important tie is not the geographical fact that the coastlines of certain nations, including the United States, lie adjacent to the same body of water. Rather, the reality of a Pacific field of activity depends upon intensifying networks of communication. The intensity of communications varied over time and from one portion of the Pacific to another. As far as the United States is concerned, a growing density of communication connections can be dated broadly from the opening of Japan to western commerce from 1853 and the establishment of regular steamship routes operating with government postal subsidies to Yokohama in 1867 (later with services to China) and to the South Pacific from 1875. In 1885 there was only one line of steamers plying the route from the United States to Japan, but by 1898 there were six, “crowded with passengers and weighted down with freight.”<sup>5</sup> The San Francisco-Yokohama trip took 22 days in 1886, but could be done in less than 12 days by 1898. These increasingly intense

and efficient networks were extended by the American takeover of the Philippines, when defence experts and commercial interests joined to promote the construction of a telegraphic cable route across the Pacific linking San Francisco, Guam, and the Philippines, and from there to Japan and China, through the Commercial Pacific Cable Co. The cable opened for business in 1903. Previously, the United States relied upon the cable resources of the British empire, and cable routes went via Singapore and the Middle East. Together with the British empire cable route via Vancouver, the Pacific could be said to be “wired” by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Trade, social interaction, the movement of peoples and ideas and scientific cooperation developed on the basis of these foundations.

These networks still require exploration by historians. The story of the political and economic competition over and impact of cabling, for instance, has hardly been told at all. Nor is there adequate coverage of a wide variety of social activities promoting a Pacific identity that developed on the basis of closer communications, such as the example of the Pan-Pacific Science Congresses of the 1920s and 1930s, though the Pan-Pacific women’s movement conferences of the same era have been skilfully charted.<sup>6</sup> The political agitation for women’s suffrage also grew across these Pacific communications networks. Carrie Chapman Catt’s visit to Asia in 1912 to promote votes for women provides one prominent example deserving further study. As Ellen DuBois argues effectively, “From a Pacific perspective, the history of woman suffrage . . . looks more varied, more complex, and more open-ended than it does from a Eurocentric point of view.”<sup>7</sup> But the implications of this statement have not been explored for many areas of trans-Pacific connections. On the basis of improved communications, Asian and Australasian influences upon the United States grew after the 1850s. One of these influences promising to reshape our understanding of American history is immigration.

## I. IMMIGRATION

In all, over five million immigrants entered the United States from 1820 to 1860, and 32 million by 1924. Of these, some 350,000 were Chinese immigrants entering the United States from 1857 to 1916, of which 290,000 came before the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Over the period 1857–1916, Chinese immigrants represented only 1 to 2

percent of total American immigration, but 9 percent of the population of California, where they first congregated.<sup>8</sup> The Chinese were an even more important component of California's labouring class at about one-fifth of the males gainfully employed in the state; and they were also an important component of the labouring class of Hawaii, admitted in 1898 as a territory of the United States.

Though most 19th century North American migratory flows were indeed across the Atlantic, viewing migration from within a Pacific perspective does alter the picture of American immigration, which has been typically conceived of in terms of first and second waves. This is a Eurocentric and Atlantic-centred notion. As is well known, a shift in the composition of European migrants occurred from the 1880s, when the pace of capitalist market change spread to southern and eastern Europe to produce second-wave immigration of Catholics, Jews and Orthodox Church adherents from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, the Balkans, Italy, and Greece. The political and religious views of the new immigrants, together with their transient habits and apparently unassimilable nature produced a severe nativist reaction in the 1890s, leading to immigration restriction movements and laws.

But the view from the Pacific complicates these neat sequences. If first-wave European immigrants had begun by the 1860s to be assimilated, Asian immigration is more difficult to fit into this two-wave model. With China drawn more into the capitalist world economy in which the need for labour mobility was becoming apparent, the 1850s to 1870s—during the so-called first wave—saw substantial Chinese migration to the west coast of the United States (and to Hawaii, Peru and other Pacific destinations such as Australia).<sup>9</sup> These Asian immigrants had many of the characteristics of second-wave immigrants. They were subject to similar attempts at racial exclusion; their customs were much stranger to Anglos even than Irish Catholicism, and assimilation was much more difficult.

This leads to a second point. The old model of a unidirectional flow across the Atlantic will not work any better than first- and second-wave theory. Chinese moved east instead of west, going as far as the Massachusetts town of North Adams where a shoe factory owner imported them as strike breakers in 1870,<sup>10</sup> though more commonly they spread to such states as Oregon, Washington and Nevada. As they spread, they introduced multilateral aspects to immigration patterns. Congress largely eliminated Chinese immigration as a political issue through the

Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1892, but Chinese immigration was in fact not completely stopped, as the figures cited above show. The category provided for under the acts to be excluded was “laborers”, but this was broadly interpreted to cast a very wide net. Meanwhile, other Asian labour came in the form of Koreans to Hawaii and California, and also the far more prominent case of the Japanese until 1907–08 when that flow in turn was restricted through the so-called “Gentleman’s Agreement.” By 1900, there was also a threat of South Asian labour, which agitated Canadian legislation in the first decade of the twentieth century.

It is now widely accepted that the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was not an aberration, but signalled a new policy of racial exclusion, in which as Erika Lee has observed, racial borders and problems of alien immigrants began to dominate American immigration practice.<sup>11</sup> All this started during the time of the so-called first-wave immigration, and contributed powerfully as precedent, intellectual influence and institutional medium for the second-wave exclusion of unwanted European immigrants, completed in the Immigration Act of 1924 (the National Origins Act). The American nation was as a result reshaped, historian Mae Ngai shows, as a “raced” nation by the 1920s.<sup>12</sup> Thus our entire concept of the relationship between immigration and national identity has changed recently as a result of the new studies of Pacific immigration exclusion, though there is clearly much more work to be done on this topic concerning the ways Asian immigration changed internal American debates. The impact of the Japanese on California has not been fully appreciated, for instance. The relationship between the arrival of the Japanese and the development of Californian and federal land policies to secure—through irrigation policies, government financial aid and technical help—the small-scale white agricultural proprietor has only recently become a topic of serious comparative research.<sup>13</sup>

The different perspective of trans-Pacific immigration is also enhanced when we look at the subject through the lens of gender analysis. The importation of Chinese and Japanese women and the unequal sex ratio in the immigrant communities created many problems both for the communities themselves and in terms of the reaction from the host American society’s punitive and censorious attitudes towards unfamiliar Asian customs. Work on the transnational communities of the Pacific immigration will cast new light on these matters. Transnational networks developed out of the experience of immigration, and out of the influence

of transnational American women's organizations. Historian Rumi Yasutake shows how Japanese Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) workers visited, advised and otherwise collaborated with the Issei WCTU women in California, seeking to raise the level of respectability of their communities, to stop the practice of importing picture brides and to protect immigrant Japanese women from domination and other ill-treatment by their husbands.<sup>14</sup>

## II. STRATEGIC ISSUES

The broad-ranging U.S. government expedition led by Lt. Charles Wilkes to the Pacific from 1838 to 1842 indicated an early interest in mapping and the exploration of potential strategic ports. The expedition was part of a larger pattern of American interest in East Asia and its trade, which went back to the American Revolution. This transnational trading connection will be discussed further below. Though the Wilkes expedition had no immediate payoff in terms of United States' commercial influence in the South and West Pacific, the acquisition of Pacific coast territories in 1848 and of Alaska in 1867 realized the potential that Wilkes and others saw for a stronger political, trading, and strategic presence on the American Pacific coast. These territorial gains were not simply expressions of Manifest Destiny, but signalled the beginning of the modern American empire based upon American geo-political interests in the Pacific as well as the Atlantic. Commodore Mathew Perry's visit to Japan was a key development and signal of the trend, coming as it did in this period, in 1853. Strategically speaking, the Alaskan takeover complemented the American nation's growing commercial interest by putting the US potentially very close to Asia indeed. In terms of cultural outreach too, missionary groups in the early nineteenth century had already pioneered the American interest in Hawaii, where, as Patricia Grimshaw shows in her study of American missionaries' wives in Hawaii, *Paths of Duty*, an important attempt at transmission of an eastern American domesticity culture to a new "frontier" environment occurred beyond the formal boundaries of the United States. The Christian missionaries who went there after 1819 and to the Marshall Islands, as the extended family of Sidney Gulick did, had important reciprocal consequences in the form of their missionary tales of heroism, domesticity, family values, and Christian conversion brought back to inspire missionaries and their supporters in the United States, as did the many

American Christian missionaries who served in China in the hundred years from the 1840s.<sup>15</sup> Pacific interests were strongly reinforced by the acquisition of California in 1848, which state soon developed important trading ties with American economic interests in Hawaii, particularly in the sugar industry. California itself began to initiate many contacts of trade and culture with East Asia by the 1860s, including the importation of roses, camellias, fruit trees and other elements of the horticultural economy that thrived in California in the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>16</sup>

Thus when historians say that the United States was an Atlantic or inward focused civilization in the nineteenth century, their comment is not strictly true even of that early period. All this trans-Pacific interest on the part of the United States began well before the nation acquired formal colonies in the Pacific in 1898. This period of increasing US interest in the Pacific culminated in the opening of the Panama Canal in 1915. The Canal would prove after its completion an immense boon to American strategy, giving the nation in effect access to both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and thus turning the nation from an Atlantic to a potentially global military force. Naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan believed in the late 1890s that American economic and strategic interests in the Pacific demanded a stronger navy and political control of the Isthmus of Panama and the Atlantic approaches to any proposed canal. This necessity lay behind the decision to retain the quasi-colony of Puerto Rico after the 1898 war with Spain, a decision which made manifest the connections between the United States's expanded Pacific vision and Atlantic interests.

The acquisition of the Philippines also paralleled and contributed to a heightened American interest in Asia, ideas that can be traced in the work of Mahan. Though a student of the navies of Europe, Mahan's thought on Asia was particularly important. He saw the Pacific and East Asia as the future key to global security. Mahan feared two things. One was the expansionist land power of Russia, and the other the impact of economic modernization upon the previously somnolent Chinese empire. The two problems were linked, as a weak China was a possible space for Russian expansionism. Writing at the time of the Boxer Rebellion, Mahan also feared the inchoate forces unleashed by European penetration and the nationalist reaction in China. An awakening China he believed could be a threat to peace if its reformist forces were simply powered by economic interests or revolutionary principles. He predicted danger in a China that mimicked European progress without the "higher ideals, which in

Europe have made good their controlling influence over mere physical might.” The consequent threat of an East-West clash could only be averted by “the extension of American power and its corollary, Christian civilization.”<sup>17</sup> American expansion was therefore seen as part of “a divine strategy for the incorporation of East Asia within Christianity.”<sup>18</sup> Mahan believed that an Anglo-American naval consortium would be necessary in the Far East to maintain stability, though he did not until after the Russo-Japanese War fear Japan,<sup>19</sup> and earlier he saw Japan as a successful modernizing power that had adapted to and incorporated western civilization’s standards of conduct.

The US acquired these external cross-oceanic political and territorial interests and commitments in the Pacific before it acquired possessions in the Atlantic. The move away from political isolation came first in regard to American interests across the Pacific rather than the Atlantic Ocean, principally through the desire to preserve the Open Door for American commerce and missionary interests in China, a policy derived from British sources.<sup>20</sup> The strategic moves of the United States in the Pacific also necessarily involved Latin America, with American whaling, guano fertilizer, and finance interests involving investments in the railroad development of Bolivia; a number of so-called guano islands were annexed under an 1856 act of Congress.<sup>21</sup> The Monroe Doctrine, too, asserting the US interdiction against European action in Latin America, involved a political interference in the former Spanish colonies and, after the Roosevelt Corollary of 1904, possible military action to prevent internal instability in the Latin American republics from providing a pretext for European intervention.

### III. TRANS-PACIFIC REFORM MOVEMENTS

A third way of looking at American history eastward across the Pacific instead of as a westward progression of American influences across the Pacific is the role of trans-Pacific connections in reform movements such as Progressivism. This case brings out especially strongly the need to critique the current tendency to see transnational history as purely Atlantic history. Through the efforts of Daniel Rodgers, historians have come to realize the importance of European stimuli upon development of American Progressivism. The United States lagged in many areas of social and economic reform, such as in providing insurance against industrial injuries, even though the nation had an extremely high rate of



accidents. In social insurance, it was Germany that took the lead in modernizing the older capitalist political economy. Americans themselves began to develop accident compensation schemes, but more slowly and, in search of models, reformers drew on both British and German legislation.

Such cases as accident law reform have been conceptualized as “Atlantic crossings.” Yet the pattern of Progressive borrowings was cross-Pacific as well as Atlantic. The state accident compensation scheme introduced in California “borrowed” from New Zealand, for example.<sup>22</sup> Indeed a wide variety of ideas filtered from Australia and New Zealand into American Progressive schemes. In *Newest England*, social reformer Henry Demarest Lloyd wrote that New Zealand democracy was “the talk of the world today,” and there he looked for inspiration in settling the competition of capital and labour through systems of industrial arbitration.<sup>23</sup> Peter Coleman has demonstrated the international circulation of ideas concerning Progressivism drawn from New Zealand, and has shown their impact on American reforms. Reformers such as irrigation promoter William E. Smythe in California proclaimed the need for “New Zealandizing” the United States through land legislation to promote small-scale agriculture, petit bourgeois proprietors, and the white race.<sup>24</sup> In a parallel fashion, the role of the labour movement in Australian social democracy was studied with equal interest by social reformers as well as academics such as economist Victor S. Clark. The extension of the secret or “Australian” ballot was one reform widely adopted in North America.<sup>25</sup> Less well known is the antipodean influence in irrigation policies through the work of Elwood Mead. The National Reclamation Act of 1902 set an important benchmark for the federal government’s role in the building of dams and distribution of water for power, farming, and flood control. The Progressive Mead, who would go on to serve as National Bureau of Reclamation chief in Washington after 1924, became an advocate of national regulation of water as a result of his work as Chief of the Victorian Rivers and Water Supply Commission in Australia from 1907 to 1915. There he experienced the inefficiencies of competition between states under a federal system, as well as the Australian tendency to rely on government intervention in the economy. When he returned to the United States he advocated vigorous government intervention and federal-state cooperation in the regulation of irrigation and water supply questions. He also urged quasi-socialist schemes to aid closer settlement by providing state aid to farmers, not

just the traditional American policy of supplying them with small quantities of cheap land. Daniel Rodgers has noted Mead's influence as part of "fashioning a new physical frame for agricultural settlement,"<sup>26</sup> even though this case reveals not an Atlantic exchange, strictly speaking, as one would expect from the title, *Atlantic Crossings*, but a broader pattern of white-settlement connections around the world.

As the case of reform movements indicates, the trans-Pacific perspective looking at the United States from the Pacific means reevaluating not only the more obvious Asian influences upon American history but also the less well-known Australian and New Zealand ones. The role of white European "settlement societies" has been given considerable attention in recent post-colonialist scholarship, but not the intricate relations between these places.<sup>27</sup> Not only did Australian social democratic movements provide examples for the United States, but a wide range of Australian influences upon the United States require greater attention from historians—from environmental matters such as the introduction of Australian flora (eucalyptus trees in California and Hawaii, and melaleuca species in Florida) and diseases (citrus scales on the American west coast orchard crops) through to the influence of the Australian or secret ballot upon the American electoral system. These influences were, once again, possible because of the trans-Pacific communications networks already established. Though numerically less important than Asian contacts overall, the Australian and New Zealand influences should not be forgotten.

In these non-Asian influences from the Pacific Rim, it is noticeable, however, that Asia is often indirectly present. It is striking how, for example, there are shared patterns of racial exclusion being introduced at almost exactly the same time in regard to Asian immigrants in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. The Immigration Commission established by Congress in 1907 included as one of its volumes a study of comparative immigration law, in which the examples of Australian literacy tests and Canadian immigration restrictions were both considered favourably.<sup>28</sup> While the United States's policies of racial control were becoming well known and influential within the British empire in the 1890s,<sup>29</sup> the reverse impact of racial controls upon the United States remains to be studied, and the extent of reciprocity in terms of information flows and policies must be established. When Americans considered the social democratic experiments in Australia and New Zealand, they were well aware that those experiments rested on policies of racial exclusion that defined Asians as an inferior Other.<sup>30</sup>

## IV. RECIPROCAL AND MULTILATERAL INFLUENCES

It must be emphasized that these connections were reciprocal relationships. They were also very complicated ones, not only involving the United States versus, say, Japan or Australia, but also involving mediating connections between the East and the West of the Pacific. An example is found in the scientific aspects of environmental policy. As in much of the environmental reform surrounding irrigation policy, American scientific agriculture was thought to be far in advance of that in Australia, New Zealand, and other places in the Pacific. The work of the US Bureau of Agriculture Experiment Stations was the subject of widespread imitation from the 1880s. A good example is the sugar industry, which shared American advice and pesticide and biological control technology around the Pacific basin, from Hawaii to the Philippines, Fiji, and North Queensland. Among the biological control initiatives was the introduction of the cane toad *Bufo Marinus* as a predator to combat the grey-back cane beetle destroying sugar cane crops. This had been successfully trialed in Puerto Rico and imported into Hawaii. Because of the close contacts between Hawaii and Australia via the steamship lines and the comparable areas of plantation agricultural settlement, Australian Department of Agriculture experts allowed the importation of the cane toad into Australia from this intermediate location. But the life cycles of the type of beetle in Australia and the cane toad did not match. The latter proved a pest, not a biological control, and has since run wild across northern Australia. Studying the disastrous history of the cane toad requires a transnational approach, since it was introduced almost simultaneously into Fiji and the Philippines as well (and possibly other places). No one has traced the transnational connections to see how the toad adapted in these different environments and what political, cultural and economic effects its introduction has had.<sup>31</sup>

## V. THE GLOBAL OUTLOOK

Yet if the Pacific is important in its own right, it is more important still for how it can lead us to reconceptualize US history as a whole, instead of weighing the specific contributions of Atlantic versus Pacific influences, or the impact of either in comparison with the adaptation of Europeans to the American environment. American historians need to appreciate much more than they appear to do that when you add the Pacific to the Atlantic focus, it is not like adding two and two together

to come up with four. There is a dynamic mix in the equation, because adding the Pacific to American economic and strategic outlooks creates or tends toward a global outlook. This is the global significance of the Pacific outlook on American history. The United States has been since 1898 neither an Atlantic nor a Pacific power, but a global power, and American interests had been global for a very long time before that; but the process of globalization has been one in which the Pacific was integral, essential, even foundational.

Let us turn to the economic aspects of American transnational activity to see how this globalizing process worked, specifically in the area of trade. This point will require us to delve deeper into American connections with the rest of the world, connections that went back to the beginning of the American republic itself. To be sure, the Atlantic provided the major focus of American economic transnational connections in the years from 1790 to 1900 in shipping, finance and capital investment, and to a slightly lesser extent in labour supply and trade. Together, financial and transport improvements had already effectively created by the 1830s one market that was trans-Atlantic. Three-quarters of American exports went to Europe and 60 percent of imports at mid-century came in return from the same source. From Europe came the nation's major trading partners, most notably Britain. The percentage of American exports going to Europe had dropped only slightly to 72 percent by 1900, but imports from outside Europe increased to one half of the total at the turn of the twentieth century and to 70 percent by 1920. The biggest increase was not from Latin America, but Asia, from which imports nearly doubled between 1860 and 1901–05, reaching 15.4 percent of imports and then nearly doubled again to more than a quarter of all US imports by the first half of the 1920s. Asia also became an increasingly important export market, from just 2.4 percent in 1860 to 11.3 percent of the total by 1921–25. Much of this increase was with Japan, where the United States sent kerosene, raw cotton, flour, locomotives, rails, cigarettes, watches and timber,<sup>32</sup> but the United States was also becoming increasingly dependent on diverse international sources for its raw materials and exotic goods. By 1920, Europe was no longer so central to American commercial connections.<sup>33</sup> The United States was becoming commercially interdependent with Asia and Latin American nations.

It must be kept in mind, however, that much of the Asian trade was mediated via Europe until this time. Only a small proportion of United States trade actually entered via Pacific ports in the second half of the

nineteenth century (around 8–9 percent of total trade).<sup>34</sup> Charles Denby, the Secretary of the American legation in China noted in 1898 that there was a “considerable trade” in American cotton goods, oil, flour, machinery, iron, and lumber credited to England and Hong Kong.<sup>35</sup> This fact emphasizes the importance of the global networks within which the nation’s Pacific relationships were enmeshed. Since the American merchant marine slumped post-Civil War to be carrying, by 1900, less than 10 percent of American trade, the United States was heavily dependent until after World War I on British shipping and insurance networks, which were centred on London. The sudden soaring of US commerce with Japan from 1916 and with Asia generally after 1919 reflected in part this fact, because during World War I British shipping was imperilled and stretched to the limit by its own war effort. With British decline setting in during World War I, the way was open to extend American Pacific trade still further and to make California more central to that trade.

Yet even for the first half of the nineteenth century, the global rather than Atlantic nature of economic relationships must be recognized. As one gushy newspaper editorialist put it, “Young America . . . pours its energies through all the channels of commerce in all quarters of the globe.”<sup>36</sup> Antebellum American commerce responded to this globalizing process by thinking globally on a commercial level. In 1857, Freeman Hunt, editor of *Hunt’s Merchant’s Magazine* in New York City, could proclaim, “Commerce now pervades the world.”<sup>37</sup> But commentators drew particular attention to Asian trade in this scheme of things. Boston merchant and peripatetic traveller George Francis Train wrote of South East Asia that Salem sea captains “know foreign markets, understand supply and demand, and the art of treating with the natives, and carry in their heads the whole history of these islands, and the ports where you can exchange, or buy and sell.”<sup>38</sup> Freed at the end of the American Revolution in 1783 from mercantilist policies that required trade to be via Britain in British vessels, Americans sought direct trading opportunities, including in the Mediterranean region,<sup>39</sup> the South Pacific and South and East Asia. American imports from Asia were 8.3 percent of the American total in 1860, with spices from the Dutch East Indies, tea and silk from China, and whaling products from the South Pacific serving as important commodities in American trade. The patterns of trade were, like migration, complicated and multilateral, spanning the globe from East Asia to the Mediterranean and the Americas, as shown by enterprising Salem and Philadelphia merchants. These merchants scoured the

ports of the Ottoman Empire in the Eastern Mediterranean (along with Western Mediterranean ports where opium and other Middle Eastern goods had been shipped) for opium to sell to China and, once the journey to China had been made, in return took many products back to the United States. Since the Chinese did not want large quantities of American goods, Yankee merchants also joined the Latin American silver trade with China, taking specie to pay for imports of Chinese tea, porcelain, silk, and nankeen cloth, and other items from East Asia. From 1795 to 1831, hundreds of American ships visited the coast of the then independent Muslim sultanate of Atjeh (Aceh) to trade in pepper, sandalwood and opium. The Salem, Massachusetts market set the world price for pepper for several decades.<sup>40</sup>

Massachusetts was also the source of further Pacific commercial and intellectual interest. Whaling was yet another reason for Americans to set their sights commercially and culturally upon the Pacific in antebellum times. American whaling was extremely important in the South Pacific along with sealing around New Zealand from the 1790s, as registered culturally through the fictional but highly descriptive works of Herman Melville.<sup>41</sup> It was the Civil War, and the discovery of kerosene as an alternative heating oil that drastically reduced the importance of this trade post-1865, along with the effects of the Confederate raider *Shenandoah's* depredations against the Yankee whaling fleet in 1865. With its domestic shipping fleet partly destroyed by the war and increasingly uncompetitive, United States investment turned decisively inland after 1865. Though after the Civil War American internal development together with changes in Asia and the European empires diminished the importance of this trade for two decades, the memory of the China trade powerfully informed American attitudes towards external expansion, and lay behind the demand for the Open Door policy in China (1899).

These nineteenth-century Pacific and global interests laid the foundations of twentieth-century world power for the United States. It is significant that the United States did not enter World War II via Europe. It was the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that brought the United States to war, and so precipitated a conflict that became global, and that turned the United States away from the so-called "independent internationalism" of the interwar years to the making of a new multilateral system of international security after 1945.<sup>42</sup> The Pacific was not an afterthought in US calculations but intrinsic to its global aspirations. Gauged roughly, the Atlantic focus can explain the majority of American connections with

the rest of the world in the nineteenth century, but not all, and less than half of those connections in the twentieth. Laudable though it is, a purely Atlantic approach to transnational history leaves a good deal unexplained. As in all fields of history, we Americanists should not remain insular and rooted in Eurocentric ways of approaching our subject. We must look for more encompassing theories. The multilateral framework encouraged by the Pacific connection adds a new dimension to the more common focus on the Atlantic, enabling us to broaden our vision toward the global.

### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), chap. 2; Robert A. McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise: A Chapter in the Enclosure of American Learning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Pekka Korhonen, “The Pacific Age in World History,” *Journal of World History* 7 (no. 1 1996), 41–70; Matt K. Matsuda, “AHR Forum: The Pacific,” *American Historical Review*, 111 (June 2006), 758–80.

<sup>4</sup> See especially my “Beyond the View from Euro-America: Environment, Settler Societies and Internationalization of American History,” in Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 168–92.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Denby, Jr., “America’s Opportunity in Asia,” *North American Review*, 166 (January 1898), 32–33.

<sup>6</sup> Fiona Paisley, “Performing ‘New Zealand’: Maori and Pakeha delegates at the Pan-Pacific Women’s Conference, Hawai’i, 1934,” *New Zealand Journal of History*, 38 (April 2004), 22–39; Fiona Paisley, “Cultivating Modernity: Culture and Internationalism in Australian Feminism’s Pacific Age,” *Journal of Women’s History*, 14 (Autumn 2002), 105–132; Angela Woollacott, “Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women’s Internationalist Activism in the 1920s–30s,” *Gender & History*, 10 (November 1998), 425–448.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen DuBois, “Woman Suffrage: The View from the Pacific,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 69 (November 2000), 539–551. For the varieties of Asian feminism see Louise Edwards and Mina Rocas, eds., *Women’s Suffrage in Asia: Gender, Nationalism and Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2004).

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Gyory, “Rolling in the Dirt: The Origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the Politics of Racism, 1870–1882,” PhD diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Erika Lee, *At America’s Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 24.

<sup>12</sup> Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> See Ian Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian–Australian Environmental Reform, 1860–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>14</sup> Rumi Yasutake, *Transnational Women’s Activism: The United States, Japan, and Japanese Immigrant Communities in California, 1859–1920* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 132–33ff.

<sup>15</sup> See Patricia Grimshaw, *Paths of Duty: American Missionary Wives in Nineteenth-Century Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989). The study of American missions to China is a vast field. For an indication of the transcultural exchanges that occurred across the Pacific among missionaries and converts, see Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> A. T. Mahan, “Effects of Asiatic Conditions upon International Policies,” *North American Review*, no. 528 (November 1900), 616.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Stanley, “Church, State and the Hierarchy of ‘Civilization’: The Making of the ‘Missions and Government’ Conference, Edinburgh, 1910,” in Andrew Porter, ed., *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880–1914* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 61.

<sup>19</sup> Jon Sumida, “Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* (G.B.) 22 (no.s 2–3, 1999), 56.

<sup>20</sup> Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 116; George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, expanded ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), chap. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth E. Shewmaker, “Forging the ‘Great Chain’: Daniel Webster and the Origins of American Foreign Policy toward East Asia and the Pacific, 1841–1852,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 129 (Sept. 1985), 225–259; John H. Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire: The Commercial and Diplomatic Role of the American Navy, 1829–1861* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985); Dan O’Donnell, “The Lobos Islands: American Imperialism in Peruvian Waters,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 39 (March 1993), 37–55; Dan O’Donnell, “The Pacific Guano Islands: The Stirring of American Empire in the Pacific Ocean,” *Pacific Studies*, 16 (March 1993), 43–66; Christina Duffy Burnett, “The Edges of Empire and the Limits of Sovereignty: American Guano Islands,” *American Quarterly*, 57 (no. 3 2005), 779–803.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 250.

<sup>23</sup> Henry Demarest Lloyd, “New Zealand: Newest England,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 84, no. 506 (Dec. 1899), 789–794.

<sup>24</sup> Peter J. Coleman, *Progressivism and the World of Reform: New Zealand and the Origins of the American Welfare State* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas,



1987); Coleman, "New Zealand Liberalism and the Origins of the American Welfare State," *Journal of American History*, 69 (September 1982), 379, 384–85, 390 (quote).

<sup>25</sup> Victor S. Clark, *The Labour Movement in Australasia: A Study in Social Democracy* (New York: H. Holt Co., 1906); L. E. Fredman, *The Australian Ballot: The Story of an American Reform* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1969).

<sup>26</sup> Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 345.

<sup>27</sup> Daiva K. Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Marilyn Lake, "The White Man under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Advent of White Australia," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 58 (2004), 41–62; Charles Price, *The Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836–1888* (Canberra: Australian Institute of International Affairs in association with Australian National University Press, 1974); 61<sup>st</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> sess., Sen. Doc. no. 761, *Reports of the Immigration Commission: The Immigration Situation in Other Countries* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911).

<sup>29</sup> R. A. Huttenback, "The British Empire as a 'White Man's Country': Racial Attitudes and Immigration Legislation in the Colonies of White Settlement," *Journal of British Studies*, 13 (November 1973), 108–137.

<sup>30</sup> Elwood Mead, *Helping Men Own Farms: A Practical Discussion of Government Aid in Land Settlement* (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 131; Jessie Ackermann, *Australia: From a Woman's Point of View* [1913], abridged edition, Sydney, Cassell, 1981), 4–5, 23; and Hugh H. Lusk, "Chinese Exclusion in Australia," *North American Review*, 174 (January–June 1902), 359–75, provides examples of literature on this theme circulating in the United States; the shared racial discourse of Progressive America and Australia is a theme in Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*, 162–63; and Marilyn Lake, "The White Man under Siege," 41–62.

<sup>31</sup> There is no academic history of this problem to speak of, but see my *True Gardens of the Gods*, 204.

<sup>32</sup> Denby, "America's Opportunity in Asia," 37

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan T.R. Hughes, *American Economic History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman Co., 1987), 368–69.

<sup>34</sup> See Ben J. Wattenburg, *Statistical History of the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 903, 907.

<sup>35</sup> Denby, "America's Opportunity in Asia," 37.

<sup>36</sup> George Francis Train, *Young America Abroad* (London: Seth Low, 1857), vii.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>39</sup> Paole Gemme, "Imperial Designs of Political Philanthropy: A Study of Antebellum Accounts of Italian Liberalism," *American Studies International*, 39 (February 2001), 19–26.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques M. Downs, "American Merchants and the China Opium Trade, 1800–1840," *Business History Review*, 42 (Winter 1968), 418–42; David F. Long, "'Martial Thunder': The First Official American Armed Intervention in Asia," *Pacific Historical Review*, 42 (May 1973), 144.

<sup>41</sup> For American whaling in the Australian case, see Gordon Greenwood, *Early Australian American Relations* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1944).

<sup>42</sup> Michael Hogan, "Introduction," in Hogan, ed., *The Ambiguous Legacy: U.S. Foreign Relations in the "American Century"* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 6.

From the perspective of ancient and medieval Western civilization, the known world extended from northern Europe to the Sahara Desert, from the Atlantic Ocean to India (and, in the hazy distance, China).<sup>33</sup> The ancient Greeks and (especially) Romans traded with distant Asian cultures via intermediate states; goods were shipped overland or by combined land/sea routes.<sup>32</sup> In the medieval period, the.Â In the nineteenth century, the European empires experienced three major changes: the Latin American Wars of Independence, the expansion of European territory in Asia, and the Scramble for Africa. Most of the Spanish Empire was lost in the Latin American Wars of Independence (ca.