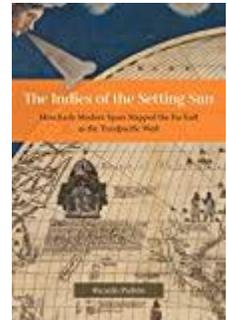


Ricardo Padrón. *The Indies of the Setting Sun: How Early Modern Spain Mapped the Far East as the Transpacific West.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020. 346 pp. \$45.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-226-45567-9.



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Gandara on Padrón, *The Indies of the Setting Sun*

Ricardo Padrón's *The Indies of the Setting Sun* considers the configuration of the Pacific Ocean by Spanish imperial agents through the production and transfer of spatial knowledge in the sixteenth century. Similar to Matthew Edney's and Carla Lois's studies of the Atlantic Ocean, Padrón explores the competing ideas that shaped the new geographies opened up to Europeans after Columbus' voyage.[1] In particular, this book challenges established historiographical interpretations that suggest that Europeans integrated the American continent as a separate entity from Asia after Magellan's circumnavigation, revealing, in turn, multiple and competing ideas about the world's geographies. In this sense, Padrón's book evokes Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen's seminal work *The Myth of the Continents* (1997), historicizing the broader geographical frameworks that were used to comprehend and integrate American and Pacific spaces with the Old World. By focusing on maps and textual cartographies, Padrón examines

the ways in which Spanish intellectuals and explorers created geographical images that linked the American colonies to the Pacific world, developing, as a result, a unique geopolitical imaginary: the Spanish Transpacific. In doing so, this book creates a thoughtful and provocative study of the invention and making of the Pacific in the Spanish imperial geographical imagination.

Padrón's arguments are presented in eight chapters that, as the author remarks (p. 7), can be separated into three different sections. The first section, which encompasses chapters 1 and 2, sets out the conceptual framework, defining and articulating the area comprehended as the early modern Spanish Pacific and the discourses in which this maritime space was incorporated. This section focuses on the early sixteenth century, centering its analysis on the cartographic and textual production of the first decades of the 1500s and creating a rich dialogue with existing historiography on the invention of America and current scholarship

on the Spanish Pacific. The second section, chapters 3 and 4, devotes attention to textual and visual cartographies of the Pacific in the aftermath of Magellan's voyage between the 1520s and 1550s. It deals with competing images of the Pacific—that is, both images that conceived of the Pacific as a broad and empty oceanic space, and those that represented it as narrow(er) and contained space. The third section explores the Spanish Pacific geopolitical imagination in the context of the Hispanic domination of the Philippines and the establishment of the Manila Galleon navigational route during the second half of the sixteenth century. These chapters showcase the projections, fears, and anxieties of Spanish imperial expansion into the Pacific. Particularly important in this regard is chapter 6, which examines the role played by China in the geopolitical imaginary of the Spanish Pacific, thus reminding any reader familiar with early modern European empires and colonial Latin America of the relevance and gravitas of the Middle Kingdom in the Spanish geographical imagination of the Pacific. In a similar way, chapter 7 examines the changes and importance of Japan in Spanish cartographic discourses, highlighting its role in the construction of a global maritime network. Lastly, chapter 8 focuses on the geopolitical importance of the Moluccas in the Spanish geographical imagination. With these three final chapters Padrón coherently integrates Asian, American, and European geographies, emphasizing the global scope of the Spanish imperial project.

This book will prove exciting for scholars specializing in early modern Latin America since Padrón questions the velocity with which sixteenth-century Spaniards geographically integrated America as the fourth part of the world. Closely following Nicolás Wey Gómez's argument, Padrón invites the reader to reconsider the metageographies of the continents as the only intellectual framework available to sixteenth-century Europeans, highlighting the existence of diverse metageographies that allowed them to make

intellectual sense of these new territories to the west.[2] In particular, Padrón devotes attention to the theory of climates and how this served as a competing geopolitical framework that rivaled the architecture of the continents, enabling the creation of a narrative that integrated the territories of the Americas and the lands of the East and Southeastern Pacific. In this vein, the author brings to the fore the concept of the "Indies," not only to designate the American continent as scholars usually use the term but to highlight a broader geography that comprised the Spanish possessions in America and Asia and their imperial projections in this region. Moreover, the author rescues concepts such as the East Indies from academic oblivion and pushes forward the idea of the sixteenth-century Spanish Transpacific; en route, he reminds us how malleable the geographical imagination can be. This is perhaps the most relevant contribution of Padrón's book to early modern studies more broadly.

One of the most remarkable features of Padrón's research is its focus on the production of geographic and cartographic knowledge. By analyzing Spanish cartography, voyage accounts, and historical narratives produced in the mid-1500s, Padrón unveils the multiple and often competing images of Pacific geographies, entangling them with concurrent imperial discourses about this space. Following Antonio Pigafetta's account of the first circumnavigation, Padrón studies cartographic representations that depicted the Pacific Ocean as a vast and empty space. This geographical imaginary of the Pacific was not only used to assert the insularity of the American continent but, as Padrón recognizes, it also highlighted the inherently hostile nature of this oceanic space, therefore questioning the viability of Spanish undertakings in the East Indies (i.e., East and Southeast Asia). The author also examines representations that depicted a relatively narrow and well-contained oceanic space, exploring well-known narratives such as Francisco López de Gómara's late 1540s work, *Historia General de las Indias* (Gener-

al history of the Indies). By reexamining these narratives within the scope of the Spanish Transpacific, Padrón underscores how they fueled the ambitions of a transoceanic empire. Moreover, they forged a sense of continuity between the Spanish Americas and the geographies of the East Indies, geopolitical entities that have often remained peripheral in studies of sixteenth-century geographies and in recent historiographical analysis of the Americas in the early modern period.

Another important contribution of Padrón's book is the relevance attached to the transfer of cartographic knowledge and the ways this knowledge changed as it circulated. In particular, Padrón examines how Spanish imperial cartographies were translated in northern Europe, particularly in Antwerp, making visible the ways in which different communities of knowledge interpreted and consumed geographic and cartographic information. By highlighting the Spanish use of the term "Indies" and the Flemish use of the term "America," Padrón demonstrates the importance of space and place in the consumption and interpretation of maps. Furthermore, in his analysis of the cultural and political importance of maps, Padrón does not omit the materiality and economic dimension of mapping. Until very recently, scholars tended to only highlight the cultural or political dimensions of maps in particular, and mapping more generally. Padrón, on the contrary, contextualizes the production of maps, raising questions about the size, materials, and practical and economic limitations involved in mapmaking. For example, in chapter 5, Padrón eloquently analyzes why Giovanni Battista Ramusio's famous 1534 map, *La carta universal della terra firme e isole delle Indie occidentale, cio é del mondo nuovo* (Universal map of the mainland and island of the West Indies, that is, the New World), erases the Moluccas from the Spanish Empire's overseas possessions. According to Padrón, "cropping the Moluccas out of the map must have made economic sense" (p. 133). The mapmaker would have needed a larger sheet, which would have raised

the cost of production or would necessitated the creation of a smaller depiction at the cost of legality and cartographic detail. With this analysis, Padrón recognizes the importance of the economic and practical limitations of mapmaking that are still too often neglected by map scholars.

The Indies of the Setting Sun also exemplifies the importance of oceanic approaches to history and cultural studies as it integrates the geographies (real and imagined) of Europe, Asia, and the American continent. By emphasizing the concept of infrastructure as developed in the making of the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth century, Padrón convincingly makes the case for the historicity of the Spanish Transpacific. In this sense, Padrón's research joins important historiographical work on the Spanish Pacific, such as Mercedes Maroto's *Producing the Pacific* (2005), Mariano Ardash Bonialian's *El Pacífico hispanoamericano* (2012), and Rainer Buschmann's *Iberian Visions of the Pacific Ocean* (2014), which integrate and entangle the Spanish Pacific world with the American colonies. Thus this book is not only relevant for map and empire scholars, but is significant for scholars of the world's oceans and early modernists working on Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific world. Furthermore, by focusing on the Spanish Transpacific infrastructure and a broader understanding of the idea of the Indies, Padrón calls into question the metageographies and spatial classifications that inform our field of studies via naturalized (but not natural) historical geographical constructs of the globe. This book, then, successfully blurs the boundaries between Asian, American, and imperial studies and has the potential to reshape Hispanic studies in the early modern period.

What are my critiques, then? As a historian interested in the process of the construction of knowledge as well as the geographical imagination of the Pacific world, I would have hoped for a more varied set of primary sources. In addition to the already wide array of material used by the au-

thor, it would have been interesting to include more military and political sources in order to document and perhaps demonstrate the impact of geographical images beyond the cultural and intellectual domains. As a historian of Latin America, I would have appreciated engagement with local representations of transpacific space. How did imperial representations vary from Mexico City or Acapulco or Manila? These questions, though, exceed Padrón's research scope, which was limited to metropolitan visions of the imperial geographies of the Spanish Empire in the sixteenth century. Notwithstanding, Padrón's work opens up new and exciting avenues for historians, literary scholars, and cultural studies scholars to question and more precisely historicize naturalized geographical imaginaries. It is now in the hands of other researchers to engage with non-European, including Spanish American, actors and their views about the changeable geographical imaginary of the Pacific world.

Notes

[1]. Matthew H. Edney, "Knowledge and Cartography in the Early Atlantic," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Atlantic World*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Carla Lois, "Mare Occidentale. La aventura de imaginar el Atlántico en los mapas del siglo XVI," *Terra Brasilis (Nova Série). Revista da Rede Brasileira de História da Geografia e Geografia Histórica*, no. 7-8-9 (2007): 1-20.

[2]. Nicolás Wey Gómez, *The Tropics of Empire: Why Columbus Sailed South to the Indies* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press Print, 2008).

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