CHAPTER 1

CHINESE MIGRANTS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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As China grows its influence over Latin America, it is vital to examine the fundamental role of its communities and their migration to understand the rich history, living memory, and current reality of transpacific relations.

Following the leading work of scholars such as Evelyn Hu-DeHart, an increasing number of researchers, particularly historians but also anthropologists and those working in the field of cultural studies, have contributed to theorizing and documenting a transpacific space of "intense transcultural movement and exchange."[1] They place the current relationship between China and Latin America in a historical context, showing how the ocean has connected peoples from the Pacific for centuries.[2] The emergence of research grounded in perspectives that embrace the Pacific world has helped advance the goal of a truly multicultural Latin Americanism.[3]

Studies by historians have recently begun to illustrate a colonial world much larger than that associated with Spain, England, and the rest of Europe. In the past decade or so, a large body of research from various disciplines has begun to study the previously neglected history of the Asian experience in Latin America and the Caribbean. Although their presence was duly acknowledged in official documents as well as in popular culture for centuries, Asians have been "hidden in plain sight" in the historiography of Latin America, as argued by Evelyn Hu-DeHart and Kathleen López.[4] These authors claim that immigrants remained peripheral in Latin American area studies until the 2000s due to the

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marginalization of immigration and immigrants as a focus of research. Asian Latin American populations were not racialized as Black or Indigenous, nor as white. Criollo-constructed identities of *mestizaje* and a "Latino" race to resist US imperialism did not include Asian Latin Americans, nor did the celebrated miscegenation of the Indigenous, European, and African triracial identity in later nationalistic movements. Asian Latin American populations have, however, a shared experience of being considered undesirable immigrants, not fitting into racial categories or nineteenth-century Western norms of sexuality and gender. Culturally and, in many cases, legally, these migrants often remained permanent outsiders.[5]

New studies on transpacific interactions dating from the colonial period to the present day signify a major shift in Latin American studies as they are only just now using a diasporic transnational approach that has yielded a rich variety of literature such as studies on transpacific trade during Spanish and British colonial rule and its impact throughout the Pacific basin; on how social movements and guerrilla groups in Latin America domesticated Maoism; and on Chinese, Japanese, and Korean immigration to countries such as Mexico, Peru, and Argentina. These studies have opened new discussions on enslavement, cultural identities, transnational communities and diasporas, nationalism, racism, and local economies and infrastructure. Ana Paulina Lee, in examining the history of Brazil, demonstrates the continued relationship between Brazil and China, from the Portuguese explorers setting out to establish lucrative trade networks with China to the immigration of Chinese labor that helped fuel Brazil's growing economy in the late 1800s (and also increased racial resentment against these immigrants).[6] For Lee and others studying transpacific interactions, these relations are continually evolving and affecting societies and cultures. As one publication in the early 2000s put it: "[Asia] is not a geographical and cultural distant latitude. It is a vivid presence in Latin America and the Caribbean. . . . Today one can find Asia in the kitchen of most Latin American countries, in education, sports, and moral values."[7] At the same time, Asian immigrants, often resorting to transpacific ties, have created different ways to belong in their new countries and have challenged traditional notions of national identity and nationhood.

These challenges to traditional notions of inclusion and identity take on a new meaning as China grows its political and economic presence in Latin America. Today, a reemergence of claims to ethnic Chinese identity—a process of "re-Sinification"—is centering these challenges in broader discussions of nationhood, multiculturalism, and ethnic and racial identities.

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CHINESE MIGRATION TO LATIN AMERICA

Large contingents of Chinese workers migrated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to countries such as Cuba and Peru, which received 225,000 trafficked Chinese laborers between the years 1840 and 1900.[8] Cantonese workers from Guangdong began migrating to the US, Canada, and Latin America in the mid-1800s to serve in both free and forced forms of labor and replace Indigenous or African labor that was becoming scarcer due to the demographic implosion of the Indigenous peoples and the end of slavery. In Panama and Costa Rica, Chinese migrants worked on railroad construction, while in Cuba and Peru they labored on sugar and cotton plantations and in the guano pits. The US Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 curtailed Chinese migration, thus forging new migratory routes through Latin America.[9] Although thousands died before finishing their indentured work contracts or their work as free laborers, many of those who survived created closed communities. In part, these communities were necessary for protection against strong external discrimination, or outright violence. The 1911 Torreón massacre in Coahuila, Mexico, where over three hundred Chinese residents were killed, is an example of this violence, as are the subsequent anti-Chinese campaigns that caused a forced migration of over fifty thousand Chinese people from Mexico.[10] These episodes of violence triggered a wave of secondary migration to the US and Central American countries.[11] Over time, however, Chinese migrants began to integrate into their host societies, establishing companies and businesses. In parallel with the United States, Chinese immigrants and their descendants created areas of commercial concentration, generally known as “Chinatowns” in the main cities of the countries where they settled.

Chinese immigration has continued throughout the decades and has recently been reenergized accompanying the growing economic and political presence of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the Western hemisphere. Temporary, low-skilled Chinese workers have begun arriving for work-specific projects in many countries in the Caribbean, including Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Grenada. The lifting of visa requirements in Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela has resulted in an increase in Chinese immigrants there as well, while Chinese executives and high-skilled workers are increasingly concentrated in the Southern Cone and Mexico.[12] This growing presence is due to several factors. First, Chinese multinational companies have imported their own staff, from executives to skilled workers, when setting up operations abroad. These companies have a growing presence in extractive industries, such as mining and oil, and in large infrastructure projects. Tech giants from

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China have also developed projects for communication infrastructure and service provision in the region. Most of this immigration is temporary, but some choose to stay in the host country.

Another cause of new Chinese migration in Latin America is the growing economic development of the PRC and the greater ability of its citizens to travel abroad. This has allowed an increasing number of people to accumulate savings and obtain credits for later investment in other countries. With these funds, new immigrants from provinces such as Fujian and Zhejiang have bought businesses and created restaurants by the dozens in cities like Buenos Aires and Mexico City. In Argentina, Chinese supermarkets created by this type of migration have become so numerous that several municipalities have had to restrict the creation of new businesses in certain areas.[13]

This recent migratory trend has unique characteristics. In the past, international migrations generally flowed from resource-poor countries to industrialized countries or those experiencing the fastest economic growth. In the present case, China, with one of the fastest growth rates in the world, continues to export its population, including to countries in Africa and Latin America. In this way, the growing Chinese presence on these continents manifests itself in two aspects: first, through embassies and large corporations, and second, through a continuous flow of professionals, businesspeople, students, and workers.

IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS

Generally, the study of immigrant communities has been characterized by an emphasis on individuals and families, focusing on both their histories and their current conditions. Recent studies with a focus on Latin America, however, have shown interest in the network of organizations built by these communities and its importance in facilitating the integration of immigrants and in maintaining their ties with their country of origin. With these organizations, immigrant groups have become key players between their native country and current home, as well as affecting influential organizations and institutions in both countries.

The role of Chinese immigrant organizations centers on people-to-people connections and joins transnational connections from above (the government and diplomatic corps) and from below (organized groups within civil society). In Mexico, for example, the Chinese Association of Mexicali and Chinese Association of Tijuana and their members are cited as key bridges between the PRC government, Chinese business interests, tourists, and others. These organizations provide the people-to-people connections necessary for the development of relation-

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ships.[14] The government of the PRC is very active in supporting these transnational connections by founding overseas Chinese relations offices at the national, provincial, and municipal levels, and in organizing a multitude of programs and activities for them. For their part, the Chinese communities have created, on their own initiative, a whole network of organizations—from the traditional ones based on a common surname or region of origin to more modern ones based on professional networks and alumni associations of university graduates in China.

A look at Latin America's relationship with China from the viewpoint of South-South migration and the organization of the diaspora is important when placing business, trade, and political connections in the context of human and labor capital flows.[15] This approach allows us to study the development of networks that go beyond states and, at the same time, opens our perspective to the transnational role played by individual and collective actors simultaneously in their country and abroad. If we ignore the role of these actors, we risk building a very limited vision of bilateral relations between China and countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Therefore, it is essential to examine the diversity of social actors, their different agendas, perceptions, and preferences, as well as their forms of interaction, strategic options, and the alliances they establish.[16]

As Fredy Gonzalez argues in his book *Paisanos Chinos*, these organizations have a long history in migrant communities. Chinese migrants in Mexico suffered anti-Chinese campaigns and subsequent mass expulsions in the years after the Mexican Revolution. These types of transnational ties forged alternative pathways for those Chinese migrants and nationals that remained. Chinese Mexican transnational political activities and organizations allowed migrants to increase their visibility and integration in Mexico, while strengthening their ties to China, thus decreasing their precarity as residents of Mexico. These transpacific ties also allowed Chinese Mexicans to make claims to Mexican civil and political rights and challenged traditional notions of identity and nationhood.[17]

Sergio Martínez Rivera and Enrique Dussel Peters help to expand the scholarship on Chinese associations in Mexico. They find a highly heterogeneous Chinese community in that country, which conspires against greater cohesion between the different groups.[18] Among other findings, the Chinese immigrant associations created in the first half of the twentieth century, those examined by Gonzalez, found it difficult to renew themselves generationally and tended to lose relevance in a very different political scenario from the one that framed their emergence. Descendants of Chinese immigrants, many of whom came to Mexico

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several generations ago, have recently formed organizations in response to the recent "reconnection" with their Chinese roots and their interest in developing and deepening ties with the PRC, precisely in the context of that country's rise as a global power.

The "new immigration" in this decade largely links to Chinese corporations and a growing business and merchant class, and points to a new kind of interaction with mainland China. This new wave of Chinese migrants to Mexico accounts for thousands of new residents, with estimates ranging from 7,500 to 11,000 in 2010.[19] The newer Chinese immigrants, arriving in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, are professionals, including executives and employees of Chinese companies, students, professors, and others. New organizations created by these recent arrivals have been primarily interested in advancing a commercial agenda. This is important when we consider that China has become Mexico's second largest commercial partner, and Mexico is China's top commercial partner in Latin America.[20]

Sergio Martínez Rivera's newest research examines how the transcontinental Chinese society in Mexico, specifically in certain areas of Mexico City, has transformed in the past decade.[21] His work contextualizes the sociospatial and economic trends of Chinese migrants in Mexico City. The development and consolidation of a Chinese community there is examined through the migrants' linkages and economic, cultural, and social contributions to Mexican society. He also analyzes the broader geopolitical factors that limit certain types of Chinese migration to Mexico, such as the lack of a solid stance on the part of the Mexican government in deepening the economic, political, commercial, cultural, and scientific ties with the Chinese government.

To the south of Mexico, in Colombia, transnationalism is particularly present in the business sector and is expressed in various ways, including its links with government agencies in different Chinese cities that focus on trade and investment promotion. According to Diana Andrea Gómez and Luz Díaz, the relationship between the traditional Chinese community and the new immigrants in Colombia is close and based on trust and a sense of community.[22] Ethnic organizations formed by the latest generation of Chinese immigrants tend to promote an agenda that seeks to integrate the political, economic, commercial, and cultural realms. These organizations show a high degree of cooperation and emphasize interaction with the local community with the aim of deepening the Colombia-China bilateral relationship.

Recent studies on Chinese associations in Peru identify a variety of links between ethnic and business associations in Peru and the Chinese embassy, as well as a remarkable network of relationships with various

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Chinese ministries and provincial chambers of commerce in China.[23] In the context of the expansion of Chinese companies abroad, the transnational relations of Chinese associations in Peru have developed remarkably, and they weave networks facilitating trade and investment. In this process, government organizations such as the Chinese Council for the Promotion of International Trade and the Association for the Development of China Abroad maintain fluid relations with Peruvian associations, creating a fertile base for the continued expansion of business ties and support of investments in Peru. These and other relations are considered strategic for both countries. Chinese immigrant organizations in Peru are seen by Beijing as a key bridge for cooperation. In this sense, the Chinese government is eager to recognize the role they can play in the bilateral relationship and is interested in reinforcing a sense of loyalty and patriotism toward China among these associations.

BILATERAL IMPLICATIONS

Beginning with the economic reforms in the last decades of the twentieth century that opened China to the world, the leadership of the PRC adopted a policy of promoting relations with the Chinese diaspora. The Chinese government went on to ask its citizens in other countries to "serve their country from abroad" (*weiguo fuwu*) instead of asking them to "return to serve the country" (*huiguo fuwu*).[24] In many Latin American countries, the first waves of Chinese migrants arrived before the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949) and the Republic of China's relocation to Taiwan (October 1949), and their formal alliance predominantly laid with Taiwan. By seeking to strengthen ties with the diaspora, however, the PRC initially also sought to cultivate its own legitimacy within the diaspora.[25] In 1978, the State Council of China expanded the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office (OCAO), which "focused on extending diplomatic protection to Chinese expatriates, but it increasingly dedicated resources to promoting their cultural affinity and national allegiance. . . . Today, OCAO assists overseas Chinese communities to create opportunities for trade with China, to overcome linguistic and cultural misunderstandings."[26] In the 1980s and 1990s, overseas Chinese associations took on greater relevance as Chinese authorities sought to attract both Chinese-owned capital (to advance its economic development goals) and Chinese entrepreneurs to participate in joint ventures.

The government of the PRC has been at the forefront of relations with its communities abroad, deploying a wide range of activities and initiatives to strengthen these ties. This policy dates from the end of the Cultural Revolution in China and a notable change in attitude toward

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overseas Chinese, who went from being considered "traitors" and enemies of the state to becoming strategic allies for the development of the country.[27] Today, the Chinese government recognizes the vital role that private investment by immigrant entrepreneurs played in the success of the first special industrialization zones created under Deng Xiaoping. The investments and philanthropic contributions of overseas Chinese facilitated the entry of large multinationals into the special export zones and, later, throughout the country. It also allowed for overseas Chinese to directly fund the strengthening of infrastructure in their home provinces through the creation of schools, health centers, and even universities.[28]

The Chinese government subsequently institutionalized relationships with immigrant entrepreneurs and other Chinese immigrants through the creation of specialized expatriate offices (*Qiao-ban*) at the national, provincial, and local levels. The Communist Party created a structure for the care of immigrants (*Qiao-lian*) at the same levels. These state-run efforts are focused on strengthening and perpetuating relationships with the roughly fifty million Chinese and their children abroad. As Min Zhou and Rennie Lee point out in the case of the United States, these activities seek less to generate new remittances and philanthropic contributions than to stimulate the transfer of scientific and technological knowledge and preserve the "good image" of China abroad.[29]

In Latin America, the activities of embassies with respect to established immigrant communities sought to facilitate relations with the respective governments and societies. In some cases, their many years of residing in the host country, often spanning several generations, endowed Chinese communities with a broad knowledge of the language and customs of each country. This information was of great value to diplomatic personnel. In the same way, the capacity of local Chinese organizations to organize receptions and welcoming activities for visiting dignitaries and to facilitate access to local networks turned out to be a valuable resource that diplomatic representations in the same country lacked.[30]

As in the United States, preserving the "good image" of the PRC turns out to be a high priority for embassies, especially as it pertains to the PRC's territorial claim to the island of Taiwan and, more recently, as it pertains to the COVID-19 pandemic—seeking to shape the narrative concerning China's role in the origins of the pandemic. Such an end is not always easy to achieve because, according to a recent study by Alejandro Grimson, Gustavo Ng, and Luciana Denardi on Chinese organizations in Argentina, although Chinese communities can orga-

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nize events in support of the activities of their diplomats, the presence of Taiwanese Chinese organizations, historically opposed to the communist government, and traditional organizations, also opposed to the same ideology, have come to create a series of conflicting situations to the detriment of the PRC's plans and activities.[31] The study further explains that immigration of Chinese origin in Argentina is characterized by a significant presence of older immigrants from Taiwan, and newer immigrants from mainland China. Identity categories are expressed in membership of organizations, that is, there are exclusive associations for Chinese immigrants from mainland China, others that bring together only Taiwanese, and still others in which Chinese and Taiwanese share membership without differences or deep divisions.

Therefore, one of the key purposes of Chinese embassies in Latin America is to neutralize any opposition activities that could endanger the curated image that Chinese diplomats and dignitaries try to project. To combat this danger, diplomatic personnel obviously cannot resort to coercion, as might be the case if the opponents lived in China. Instead, they resort to various types of rewards, judiciously administered to compensate collaborators of official initiatives, while excluding opponents. The rewards include invitations to official dinners and banquets, the awarding of plaques and prizes, trips to China, and scholarships for the children of migrants to study or participate in summer camps in China. In Peru, the Latin American country with the largest Chinese community, these policies seem to have had a significant effect, leading to a de facto alliance between the local embassy and the main community organizations.[32] In Mexico, for example, the Chinese embassy "has pressured resident Chinese communities to register their activities officially, advance opportunities for Chinese firms through local political and business connections, and explicitly articulate support for the PRC's One-China Policy."[33] In Argentina, on the other hand, differences and possible confrontations persist with the resident Taiwanese community, which is opposed to the growing influence and power of representatives of the PRC.[34] Grimson, Ng, and Denardi's ethnographic research uncovers a complex dynamic regarding the use of public space in Argentina. The celebration of the Chinese New Year in Buenos Aires's relatively new Chinatown is an interesting example of a concerted effort by the Chinese embassy to displace Taiwanese associations and assume control over the festivities with a clear public diplomacy agenda.

These embassy activities, plus China's growing political and economic presence in Latin America, have had a notable double effect. First, they have strengthened the transnational ties of Chinese ethnic organizations, previously limited to purely domestic projects and ac-

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tivities within each country. Contrary to what happened in the United States, immigrant transnationalism in this case does not arise from the initiative of immigrant organizations or those of their descendants, but from the reactivation of ties within society and place of origin at the initiative of governmental agencies.[35] Chinese immigrant transnationalism from Latin America is, to a large extent, the result of initiatives "from above"—that is, from the Chinese state—rather than from the internal dynamics of the immigrant communities themselves.

A second consequence is the resurgence for members of these communities in reaffirming their ethnic identity in significant numbers. In particular, descendants of Chinese immigrants, already assimilated to the language and customs of the host societies, have experienced a process of "re-Sinification," seeking to learn a language already forgotten and to identify as Chinese, with or without a national script. For example, Costa Rica has recently seen the development of multiple institutes, both public and private, that broaden the learning of Chinese language and culture among Costa Ricans and help them to define what "Chineseness" means for themselves, especially for those descended from previous waves of immigration from China.[36] Importantly, as Monica DeHart notes, "the forms of Chineseness they aspire to are not found locally or in an ancestral Chinese village; they are produced through transnational connections to the center of China's capitalist development."[37] The increasing power and prestige of the PRC clearly influences this resurgence of ethnic pride, but it is also associated with the remarkable advantages, material and social, that the ties with embassy staff and Chinese company executives can bring.[38]

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PRC

As mentioned, preserving and enhancing the "good image" of the PRC is a high priority for the Chinese diplomatic corps throughout the Latin American and Caribbean region. The deepening of economic ties and increased migration flows to the region have varied effects at the societal level. Recent scholarship on the impact of transpacific trade explains that this trade has "added unprecedented opportunities for individual social mobility; enabled new ways for marketplaces to adapt to austere, neoliberal policies; and led to improvisation in areas of credit, communication, and transactions between Chinese and Latin American trading communities."[39]

Chinese trade, outbound foreign direct investment (OFDI), and infrastructure projects have also had a significant impact on the economies of Latin America and the creation of jobs in the region. In a recent re-

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port published by the International Labor Organization (ILO), Chinese activities created 1.8 million jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean between 1995 and 2016.[40] Two-thirds of these jobs were created through net trade, with the remaining 20 percent through infrastructure, and 15 percent through OFDI. Chinese trade specifically had a positive impact on job creation in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. The ILO report found that between 1995 and 2011, 1.15 million new jobs were created in these countries, accounting for 2.15 percent of total new employment in the region. However, countries and sectors were affected differently. Brazil attained the most regarding job creation, with raw material sectors such as agriculture and mining benefiting the most from Chinese exports, while other sectors—namely, computers, textiles, and footwear—lost to Chinese imports.[41]

Despite these effects, the increases in Chinese immigration, the saturation of markets with Chinese products, and competition in the manufacturing sector have created uncertainty and, in some cases, suspicion regarding the relationship with China. For example, it is estimated that the domestic Mexican market is vulnerable to Chinese imports "with 97 percent of its manufacturing exports—which represent 71 percent of its national export base—under threat from China."[42] The concern may be warranted. By 2002, one year after China became a member of the World Trade Organization, Mexico was estimated to have already lost 672,000 industrial sector jobs due to rising Chinese exports to the United States, Mexico's largest export market. The perceived threat of Chinese exports/imports have led to calls by advocacy groups in Mexico, such as the Cámara Nacional de la Industria del Vestido (National Chamber of the Clothing Industry) and the Confederación de Cámaras Industriales (Confederation of Industrial Chambers), for greater government intervention and emphasis on industrial policies to help mitigate such threats.[43]

Overall, Latin Americans have mixed views of China. According to a Pew Research Center survey in 2019, about half of the respondents in Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina had a favorable opinion of China. About a quarter of respondents in these three countries expressed negative views of China.[44] A study of anti-Chinese attitudes by Ariel C. Armony and Nicolás Velásquez published in 2015 focusing on Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Peru showed that 72 percent of negative commentary on China in social media centered on two themes: China's growing economic power with the impending menace of economic domination; and apprehension about Chinese immigration.[45]

In Argentina, Chile, and Mexico, over half of respondents to a 2013 Pew Research Center poll expressed concern that "Chinese ideas and

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customs are spreading" in their countries. In Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, between 37 percent and 51 percent of respondents expressed dislike for China's way of doing business. Criticisms of companies of Chinese origin, for example, focus on accusations of violations of labor regulations, destruction of the environment, and lack of respect for local communities and their cultures.[46]

The view of Latin Americans toward China is complex and, in certain aspects, contradictory. Despite the fact that a majority recognize the importance of China and its presence in the region, there are fears of China's possible domination of domestic markets and of the effects that China as a global power may have on Latin America. Countries like Mexico and Argentina have a history of anti-Chinese sentiments reflected in aggressions against the immigrant community. Although these attacks have diminished and discriminatory policies have been undone, hostility and protests, sometimes violent, persist against communities of Chinese origin. In Mexico, various forms of media have increasingly become xenophobic, "criticizing the disloyal, opportunistic, and dishonest nature of Chinese business activities" and Chinese immigrants and their descendants are "publicly associated with Mexico's diminishing productivity and competitiveness as local producers are squeezed out of the market and are also publicly accused of importing counterfeit goods, including traditional Mexican handicrafts such as blankets and pottery for the domestic and tourist markets."[47] The xenophobic rhetoric often leads to violent outcomes. The Chinese Association of Tijuana, for example, in 2008 alone registered ten attacks against businesses associated with the organization. The perceived indifference of local authorities toward resolving these grievances and holding the perpetrators accountable often leads the victims of abuse to prefer "not to involve the police, instead turning to the association for social and financial support."[48]

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as Carol Chan explains in her most recent work, ethnic Chinese experienced renewed racism and xenophobia connected to the pandemic, underlining the precarity of the Chinese migrant community in Chile in the face of racist reactions to the outbreak of the virus (see Chan, chapter 2 in this volume). In the pre-pandemic period, and due to the dichotomization of migrant groups as "good" and "bad" in Chilean politics and culture, Chinese migrants—seen as good, hardworking, and apolitical—were often used to stigmatize "bad" migrant groups. However, as COVID-19 spread throughout Latin America, verbal and physical attacks against ethnic Chinese and Chinese immigrants in Chile increased. As in other parts of the world, individual and systemic racism escalated in Chile, reproducing old, xenophobic stereotypes of the Chinese.[49]

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These reproductions are enduring in many cases. Throughout the history of Chinese and other Asian groups' migrations to Latin America, Asian Latin Americans have often remained permanent outsiders. Frequently, Asian migrants are met with individual and systemic racism, regardless of their country of origin. In Argentina, anti-Korean sentiment in the 1990s and violence against the Chinese community in the early 2000s contrasted with national ideas of multiculturalism. Chisu Teresa Ko argues that this demonstrates the failure of multiculturalism or multicultural imagination to overcome hegemonic power structures, thereby creating new forms of racism.[50] While in the United States white hegemony is imposed through explicit racial exclusion and classification, in Argentina, for instance, a national narrative of being nonracial—and therefore presumed white—promotes a homogeneous whiteness that excludes those who do not fit.[51] Currently, many scholars of Asian Argentine studies use ethnic *colectividades* to inform notions of Asian Argentines. These *colectividades* are based on country of origin and seem to be the most common form of identification.[52]

This contrasts with the United States, where Asian pan-ethnicity has served as a powerful tool for political participation and understanding the relationship of Asian Americans to their country. Pan-ethnicity was also used in Asia by migrants as a political and scholarly strategy to confront imperialism in the region. Scholars such as Rebecca Karl argue that early pan-ethnic organizations, like the Asian Solidarity Society created by Chinese intellectuals and other expatriates in Tokyo, were used as tools to resist state-centered narratives of history integral to imperialism and the nation-building projects of Japan in the early 1900s.[53]

In Latin America, even in countries with large Asian populations that have historically been excluded by white hegemonic systems, Asian migrants have not adopted a pan-ethnic framework for self-identification. Ko argues that a pan-ethnic framework—in this case in Argentina—would allow for an examination of Asian Argentines' shared experiences, their negotiation of Argentine citizenship and participation in broader Argentine society, and their joint opposition to a discourse of erasure and misrecognition.[54] A pan-ethnic Asian framework can demonstrate the numeric presence of Asians in Argentina, which can then be used as a powerful tool for political action. As Grimson argues, race and ethnicity are necessary prerequisites to participating in the political system of Argentina today.[55] A racial and ethnic perspective brings richness to the analysis of Latin America's contemporary relations with China by helping us understand how state-to-state relations are shaped by sociocultural dynamics and questions of identity.

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POLITICAL AGENDA OF THE PRC

China's economic agenda in Latin America is supported by a political program that has been acquiring greater importance. Over a decade ago, China proposed to strengthen its "comprehensive cooperation" with Latin America—that is, to strengthen cooperation beyond the economic sphere.[56] This strategy required stronger political ties, the strengthening of high-level exchanges between legislatures, political parties, and local governments, and the maintenance of regular consultations with Latin American countries on issues of international and regional importance. This agenda is complemented by a plan to intensify cooperation in science, technology, education, and environmental protection. Cooperation with regional and subregional organizations is also emphasized. The establishment of the China-Community of Latin America and Caribbean States (CELAC) Forum in 2014 and subsequent forums are important political steps in advancing this agenda.[57]

The second China-CELAC Forum in 2018 outlined a joint action plan for 2019–2021, with priority areas that included increased exchange in the health sector, especially in the control and prevention of diseases and response to health emergencies.[58] These priority areas rapidly came to the forefront in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic. As the virus tore through Latin America, China quickly moved to provide aid to the region, leveraging its position as a leading producer of medical supplies. To all countries with which it has diplomatic relations, China donated large quantities of medical equipment and offered US$1 billion in loans to the region for the purchase and distribution of a vaccine. There has been collaboration with Latin American countries such as Brazil and Mexico to conduct clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccine.[59] This type of "medical" or "mask" diplomacy is part of Beijing's global effort to "overcome initial negative publicity and to recast China as an efficient and heroic country in the eyes of international public opinion," as one observer put it.[60]

This strategy seems to be succeeding in certain areas and reinforcing the negative perception of China in others. In April 2020, the Chinese government sent a large shipment of masks, gloves, and protective suits to Argentina, with a quote in Spanish from the epic poem "El Gaucho Martín Fierro" on the importance of brotherhood. While the minister of foreign affairs applauded the donation, and it received much positive attention in Argentina, other news outlets reported on the shoddiness of the materials, thus reinforcing widely held beliefs that associate Chinese products—and by association Chinese businesses and labor practices in Argentina—with poor quality.[61]

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Chinese immigrant organizations have also played a nominal role in "mask" diplomacy. While most donations were given directly to governments by the Chinese public and private sectors, a few donations came from Chinese organizations and companies based in Latin America and the Caribbean. In April 2020, the Zhejiang Chamber of Commerce in Chile donated masks, face shields, and other medical equipment to the Investigations Police, the country's civilian police force. The president of the Zhejiang Chamber of Commerce, Chen Wenguang, said, "Chile has become our second home . . . we must first ensure the safety and health of you [the Investigations Police]. This is also our first line of defense."[62]

THE CHINESE TRANSNATIONAL FUTURE

As China continues to reaffirm its role in the world, the "re-Sinification" of second and third generations in countries such as Peru and Mexico is a new phenomenon in the field of immigrant transnationality that is being seen around the world. The social dynamics arising from the growing presence of China in Latin America has not only reenergized the ties of immigrant communities with their peoples and regions of origin but also has awakened ethnic identities, linguistic uses, and cultural traditions previously relegated or forgotten with the passage of time and generations.[63]

Studies on Chinese immigrant organizations in Peru, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, and Argentina represent a look at an important set of actors in the analysis of the new relationship between China and Latin America. These associations allow us to understand the dynamics of China's ties with the region from a "grassroots globalization," which opens a window to a complex series of interactions that go beyond states, corporations, or individuals. At the same time, these studies show a different transnationalism that reflects a process of identity reaffirmation and, simultaneously, a particular dynamic in which governments make use of organizations of the immigrant community to advance their commercial and political goals.

Rather than focusing on denouncing efforts to damage China's image, Beijing is now interested in promoting China's positive image around the world. Examples of aid and support to counteract the global health crisis and its deep impact throughout Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the rest of the Global South illustrate these efforts. COVID-19 put enormous stress on Latin American and Caribbean economies, and the population of the region continues to perceive fewer benefits than those expected from their government's commercial relationships with China. This is coupled with an increase in anti-

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Chinese sentiment due to the pandemic.[64] Therefore, it is likely that Beijing will emphasize engagement and outreach not only with multilateral and regional institutions but also through "grassroots globalization" and the "re-Sinification" of Chinese descendants. As Latin America and the Caribbean look to rebuild economies wrecked by the pandemic, multilateral engagement and the intricate dynamics of Chinese ties with the region and the role of immigrant organizations will continue to matter for Chinese foreign policy in these countries.

Continued research is necessary to understand more fully these multilevel emerging ties. The role of transnational actors—individuals living simultaneously in two or more places—in the context of China and Latin America has been explored by few scholars. Notions of cultural hybridity and hegemonic notions of citizenship inform new interactions between homeland and host country, but the rapidly changing nature of migration and shifting cultural identities that embody both the Asian Latin American in general and Chinese in particular require new analytical frameworks. Aihwa Ong's flexible citizenship approach frames transnational practices and strategies of wealthy, "hyper-mobile" East Asian migrants in North America within the global capitalist system.[65] However, this approach does not fully capture the experience of simultaneously living in several countries, or the wide range of economically, culturally, and socially diverse Chinese and ethnic Chinese in Latin America.

Another topic that has yet to be explored by scholars and will be critical to the framework set forth in this essay is the role of Latin American migrants to China. Latin American and Caribbean embassies, chambers of commerce, and cultural centers cultivate connections with Latin Americans living in China. However, very little research exists on this topic to date. Further investigation into this growing phenomenon is needed in order to understand the full circulation and flow of people and how they shape the dynamic relationship between China and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Pacific-centered, transnational scholarship must continue to produce new studies that explore the intersection among perceptions, attitudes, and responses toward China, Chineseness, and Chinese immigrant communities, as well as emerging Latin American immigrant communities in China. This new and growing field of scholarship will help academics, activists, policymakers, and others seeking to understand, among other things, the implications for the complex and multidimensional interactions between the PRC and the Latin American and Caribbean region.

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NOTES

1. Bachner and Erber, "Remapping the Transpacific," vi.

2. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, 16.

3. Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History*; and Wesley-Smith and Goss, *Remaking Area Studies*.

4. Hu-DeHart and López, "Asian Diasporas in Latin America."

5. Young, *Alien Nation*.

6. Lee, *Mandarin Brazil*.

7. Morimoto et al., *Cuando Oriente llegó a América*, back cover.

8. Palma and Montt Strabucchi, "Chinese Business in Latin America," 179.

9. Gonzalez, *Paisanos Chinos*.

10. Gonzalez, *Paisanos Chinos*; and Jacques, "Chinese Massacre in Torreon."

11. Gonzalez, *Paisanos Chinos*. Fredy Gonzalez's *Paisanos Chinos*, Grace Peña-Delgado's *Making the Chinese Mexican*, and Julia Maria Schiavone Camacho's *Chinese Mexicans*, explore how this secondary migration in many instances forced expulsion, triggered transpacific consequences, and forged alternative discourses of Mexican national identity. In particular, Schiavone Camacho's gendered lens of Mexican identity for Mexican women unable to leave southeast Asia (Portuguese Macau, British HK, Shanghai, Nanjing) after being deported as refugees from the US shows how by challenging their legal status, these women helped shape both Cold War politics and notions of citizenship in a postrevolutionary Mexico; Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans*, 1.

12. Mazza, "Chinese Migration to Latin America."

13. Grimson, Ng, and Denardi, "Las organizaciones de inmigrantes chinos"; and Chinese-Mexican Chamber of Commerce "Notes on the Immigrant Chinese Community in Mexico."

14. Hearn, *Diaspora and Trust*.

15. Bodomo, "African Trading Community in Guangzhou"; and Cissé, "South-South Migration."

16. Levy, "Introduction."

17. Gonzalez, *Paisanos Chinos*, 28.

18. Rivera, and Dussel Peters, "La diáspora china en México."

19. Flores, "México vive segunda oleada de inmigrantes."

20. Gobierno de México, "Relación Económica."

21. Rivera, "La colonia Viaducto Piedad."

22. Gómez and Díaz, "Las organizaciones chinas en Colombia."

23. Tamagno and Velásquez, "Las asociaciones chinas en el Perú."

24. Biao, "Productive Outflow of Skills," 127.

25. Gonzalez, *Paisanos Chinos*, 14.

26. Hearn, *Diaspora and Trust*, 177–178.

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27. Leung, "Role of Overseas Chinese"; and Portes and Zhou, "Transnationalism and Development."

28. Leung, "Role of Overseas Chinese"; and Portes and Zhou, "Transnationalism and Development."

29. Zhou and Lee, "Traversing Ancestral and New Homelands."

30. Díaz and Gómez, "Inmigración y patrones culturales"; and Tamagno and Velázquez, "Las asociaciones chinas en el Perú."

31. Grimson, Ng, and Denardi, "Las organizaciones de inmigrantes chinos."

32. Tamagno and Velázquez, "Las asociaciones chinas en el Perú."

33. Hearn, *Diaspora and Trust*, 180.

34. Grimson, Ng, and Denardi, "Las organizaciones de inmigrantes chinos."

35. Portes and Zhou, "Transnationalism and Development"; and Zhou and Lee, "Traversing Ancestral and New Homelands."

36. DeHart, "Who Speaks for China?."

37. DeHart, "Chino Tico Routes," 78.

38. Tamagno and Velázquez, "Las asociaciones chinas en el Perú."

39. Muller and Colloredo-Mansfeld, "Introduction," 14.

40. Dussel Peters and Armony, "Efectos de China."

41. Dussel Peters and Armony, "Efectos de China."

42. Hernández Hernández, "Economic Liberalization," 76.

43. Hearn, *Diaspora and Trust*, 67, 72.

44. Pew Research Center, "China's Economic Growth."

45. Armony and Velásquez, "Anti-Chinese Sentiment."

46. Armony and Velásquez, "Anti-Chinese Sentiment."

47. Hearn, *Diaspora and Trust*, 181.

48. Hearn, *Diaspora and Trust*, 198.

49. In the United States, for instance, racism and xenophobia against Asians and Asian Americans increased significantly following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, manifested in harassment, discrimination, and even deadly violence.

50. Chisu Teresa Ko, "Toward Asian Argentine Studies."

51. Like whiteness, post–Civil War creations of *mestizaje* identities in El Salvador excluded and erased minority groups like Asians from the national discourse; see DeLugan, "'Turcos' and 'Chinos' in El Salvador."

52. Ko, "Toward Asian Argentine Studies."

53. Karl, "Creating Asia."

54. Ko, "Toward Asian Argentine Studies."

55. Grimson, "Nuevas xenofobias."

56. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC, "China's Policy Paper."

57. China-CELAC Forum, "Beijing Declaration."

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58. China-CELAC Forum, "Joint Action Plan."

59. Sanborn, "Latin America and China ."

60. Roy, "China's Pandemic Diplomacy," 1.

61. Carvalho, "As US Turns Inward."

62. Chang L., "COVID-19 aid."

63. It would be important to know the extent to which they are capturing culture and traditions from their regions of origin, or whether they are taking on cultural aspects that the Chinese government wants to advance. If these immigrants are second or third generation, they are removed from communist policies that were put in place to "purify" the culture, counter old customs, and so on. Future research could examine how culture and tradition are being adapted by Chinese immigrants in Latin America in a context marked by a rich diversity of linguistic and cultural variation, on one hand, and a sanitized version of Chinese culture promoted by the PRC, on the other.

64. Sanchez-Rivera, "Legacies of 'Race' Science."

65. Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*.

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