

description” to almost slang at times and this detracts from the overall quality of the book. That said, it is well worth the read, especially as a primer for readers with limited knowledge of US naval preparations for the war in the Pacific and the eventual attack on Pearl Harbor.

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**López, Ruth Mandujano. *Steamships across the Pacific: Maritime Journeys between Mexico, China, and Japan, 1867-1914***

**Hong Kong University Press, 2025**

190 pp., maps, notes, bibliography

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The history of transoceanic voyages has always been one of the most prominent topics of maritime history and the development of passenger liners in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century has especially been the subject of many well-known historical studies and books. Nevertheless, the vast majority of these works deal with the history of transatlantic navigation, leaving transpacific navigation a topic nearly dwarfed in comparison. Thus, Ruth Mandujano López’s new book focusing on maritime journeys between Mexico, China, and Japan contributes to a field of inquiry rarely visited by maritime historians, despite being a topic having the potential to contribute substantially to the understanding of today’s globalized world.

Focusing on connections between Mexico and the nations on the Asian side of the Pacific, López shows that transpacific navigation was by no means just an affair of the US and Canada, but that other American nations were also interested in building up transpacific navigation to support their economic development and to bring in (cheap) labor for national projects like the construction of railroads. Opposite to many other studies on transoceanic navigation history, López does not focus too much on navigational aspects themselves or the technological developments of the ships but on the consequences of a maritime link being established for the nations involved and especially the consequence of an influx of Asian people upon Mexico. She clearly showcases how and why immigrants from Asia could build up economically successful lives in Mexico but not become fully integrated members of Mexican society. By doing so, she provides not only a relevant historical analysis but also offers an analysis that might be helpful for understanding the issues of today’s migrants all over the globe, including Mexican emigrants to North America. Thus, her book is one of the few works which are of high importance not only in the context of

historical studies, but for a better understanding of some of the most pressing issues of today's global society.

Although to a certain degree a side story, one of the most interesting of the many topics discussed by López is the issue of trachoma, an eye disease with the potential for irreversible blindness or vision impairment caused by a bacterium and transmission by direct or indirect transfer of eye and nose discharges of infected people. While cases of trachoma could be found on many ships coming to Mexican ports with both first- and second-class passengers as well as those passengers travelling in steerage being affected, López clearly shows that the official response to passengers arriving with trachoma was based on the class in which they traveled. First-class passengers were normally able to disembark even if showing symptoms of the disease while steerage passengers faced shipboard quarantine for extended periods of time. The careful analysis of port doctors' reports clearly showcases that the trachoma issue was mainly understood as a socio-economic phenomenon rather than an actual medical issue.

Altogether López's book needs to be lauded for bringing the history of transpacific navigation of a minor nation out of the shadows and to show that maritime industries were an integrated element of nation-building projects for such countries, even if the available maritime means of these nations might have been very limited and the majority of vessels employed for these maritime industries were owned and operated by other nations.

As a pure academic historical analysis of high quality, *Steamships across the Pacific: Maritime Journeys between Mexico, China, and Japan, 1867–1914* might be one of the books not really being recommended to somebody just looking for an easy-to-digest history of transoceanic navigation between Mexico and various Asian nations, but it can definitely be recommended to any maritime historian looking to understand how maritime industries were interconnected with state modernization projects of nations that might have been understood as minor players by contemporary observers. Furthermore, the book can also easily be recommended to any historian interested in the field of global or world history due to it discussing the interdependencies of such nations and more important an (indirect) discussion as to how the maritime industries might have contributed to increased levels of xenophobia once a maritime connection between different parts of the world had been established. Finally, Mexico is too often understood either just as one of many American nations or the southern neighbor of the US. López's book helps to understand that such a perspective is far too narrow and that Mexico had its own ideas and plans for becoming an integrated element of an early globalized society around 1900 that included an active maritime policy towards the Pacific and

the Asian nations.

Would I use the book as an assigned reading in a maritime history class? Without any doubt the answer to this question is a clear yes, mainly because the book clearly demonstrates that maritime history is not just about ships but about the countries that are connected by the shipping lines. I might even recommend the book to colleagues teaching Latin American or Asian courses for the same reason and to bring their attention the fact that transpacific navigation was an important element for the development of these regions even if the number of ships sailing between these regions never reached the numbers of ships crossing the Atlantic. Unfortunately, the book includes neither an index nor charts of the areas discussed.

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**Luengo, Pedro and Gene Allen Smith, eds. *A Fortified Sea: The Defense of the Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century***

**University of Alabama Press, 2024**

xiv + 308 pp., figures, maps, notes, bibliography, index

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The intrusion into the area of what would become the West Indies and the coastal area of the Gulf of Mexico by Europeans involved the establishment of settlements and plantations, an influx of slaves, and inevitably conflicts between competing colonizing powers and Indigenous nations. Construction of appropriate fortifications was mandatory to protect these outposts at the edge of empire, trade routes home, and ensure regional hegemonic dominance. This edited collection focuses on the British and Spanish efforts to do this in their colonies in what the editors call the contested borderlands.

While acknowledging that the Dutch, French, Danish, British and Spanish colonized the region, the collection's focus on Spain and England facilitates a deeper dive into the two nations' efforts. It also allows for the rich Spanish evidence to be fully explored, making available for an English-speaking audience material that until now has largely resided in the Spanish academy.

The papers are organized into three parts. The first reviews the education of Spanish military engineers. These two chapters describe the tension in the training between theory and practical experience and that between the military and civil authorities in construction of outposts. Jaun Corbalán states that Spanish military engineers received sound training that prepared them for the