

Ensayos de Reseña/Review Essays

Comings and Goings: The Multiple Faces of Latin American Diasporas

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- *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas*, edited by Wannii W. Anderson and Robert G. Lee. New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, edited by Jonathan Fox and Gaspar Rivera-Salgado. Distributed by Lynn Rienner Publishers for the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, UCSD, and the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, UCSD, 2004.
- *Diáspora michoacana*, edited by Gustavo López Castro. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán y el Gobierno del Estado de Michoacán, 2003.
- *The Japanese in Latin America*, by Daniel M. Masterson (with Sayaka Funada-Classen). Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
- *Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean: Fragments of Memory*, edited by Kristin Ruggiero. Brighton, East Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2005.

Latin America cannot be appreciated as a geopolitical or sociocultural space unto itself. Even before the title of ‘Latin America’ was imposed on the region, it was an arena of comings and goings. The initial settlers from Asia came untold thousands of years ago and traveled far and wide, eventually populating the entire continent from the Arctic in the far north to Tierra del Fuego in the far south. Thousands of years later, in the late 1400s and early 1500s, the Spaniards and the Portuguese made their way into the region, and were followed soon thereafter by other Europeans, including the French, the Dutch, and the English.

During the colonial era, still other peoples arrived, some in pursuit of fortune, others escaping persecution or the ravages of wars, and still others brought as slaves to serve unknown masters in unknown lands. Most of the region emerged from colonial and mercantilist domination in the nineteenth century. The opening of the doors of opportunity attracted new immigrants, both from the east and from the west. Italians, Germans, and other Europeans previously restricted from settling in colonial Latin America found opportunities as entrepreneurs in urban and in rural areas. Jews and Protestants formerly forced to hide their religious affiliations were able to come out of hiding. Even more surprising was the arrival of Asians, especially from China and Japan, as these nations were opened to international trade and emigration in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The twentieth century witnessed a continuing flow of immigrants into the nation states of Latin America from Europe and from Asia, especially among peoples caught up in World War I, the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression and the

civil conflict in Spain in the 1930s, World War II, and the subsequent period known as the Cold War. At the same time, a small trickle of emigrants from Latin America became a torrent by the beginning of the twenty-first century. The primary destination of these emigrants was the United States. Later, as easy entry to the United States was replaced by much stricter regulations, emigrants took themselves and their families to Canada, to various European nations, and even across the Pacific to Australia and New Zealand. A small number of individuals and families even returned to their European or Asian homelands after having spent a generation or more in the New World.

Today, the landscape of Latin America is marked by the comings and goings of generations of people with diverse backgrounds and uncertain futures. In this context, many scholars are working to understand the ebb and flow of peoples into, within, and out of Latin America. We do not yet have definitive answers to our questions, but the current wave of monographs and edited volumes offers new perspectives on diasporas both old and new.

In recent scholarship the concept of 'diaspora' increasingly is used to describe the international movement of individuals. The term first was associated with the dispersion or spreading of the Jewish people beyond their homeland, especially after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by Roman armies in A.D. 70. The Jewish model for diasporic communities suggests the following essential elements: a single place of origin (a homeland), a multi-generational relationship with a real or imagined homeland, a process (for example, kinship through the mother's line) through which individuals can self-identify with a diasporic community, and multiple places of destination. In this sense, not all population flows are diasporas. Diasporic communities also may experience tension with their host societies, which may result in isolation (the construction of ethnic/religious ghettos) and persecution (wearing of special symbols, restriction of civil rights). The idea of homeland serves as the central location for defining collective identities and group memory.

The discourse of diaspora is a discourse about place, history, and memory, and even myth – each of which also is a discourse about identity. Diasporas are the result of the many forces that displace individuals from their homeland, such as economic pressure to migrate; political, ethnic and cultural persecution; and wars. The political and economic environments in both the homeland (the sending society) and in the host land (the receiving society) are vitally important for understanding the many faces of diasporas. Scholars have noted different types of diasporas, including 'victim', 'labour', 'trade', and 'imperial' diasporas (Cohen 1997). These categories are not mutually exclusive, but do reflect the general impetus behind the movement of individuals. Today, diasporas can no longer be viewed as unidirectional flows. It is more appropriate to view diasporas as transnational, with diasporic communities intimately involved with the homeland while being physically dislocated from it.

Issues surrounding the homeland are linked to the construction of collective identities, often based on ethnicity and nationalism. The construction of identity in diaspora is invariably linked to the maintenance of linguistic, religious, and cultural patterns. The ability or inability to perpetuate these cultural forms allows the diasporic community to maintain its connection to the homeland and thus to establish identities based upon the homeland.

Related to the framework of diaspora are the key concepts of transnationalism

and migration. Whereas diasporas typically have a single place of origin and multiple locations of settlement, transnational communities are built upon the connection of two or more communities through migration. Transnationalism also implies the continued interaction of these communities. Migration, on the other hand, is the movement of individuals from one location to another, without the requirement that ongoing relationships exist between sending and receiving communities. These distinctions will become apparent as we consider each volume in turn.

In this review, we consider five recent volumes that collectively offer more than 1,900 pages of text containing some 73 chapters. The authors and editors share with their readers a very diverse set of projects – ranging from carefully drawn narratives of specific individuals/families/households to regional assessments of the impact of migrations to transnational perspectives on diasporas. Some writers give greater attention to history, others are focused on the present, and a few contemplate the future.

Geographically and historically, the broadest of these five volumes is *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas*. Its thirteen chapters are divided into four parts. In the first of two chapters offering ‘frameworks’ for the volume, W. Anderson and R. Lee use the concept of ‘displacement’ as ‘an analytically productive paradigm for understanding the Asian experience in the Americas historically and comparatively’ (p. 10). Borrowing from earlier work by Angelika Bammer (1994), they identify four forms of displacement among immigrants, refugees, exiles, and expatriates: ‘physical/spatial displacement, cultural displacement, psychological/affective displacement, and intellectual displacement’ (p. 11). They correctly point out that individuals and groups can experience more than a single form of displacement. They also observe that displacements for specific individuals or groups must be contextualized to the political and historic moments of their settlement. Their emphasis on diverse forms of displacement leads the editors to give special attention to the ways in which displaced persons conceptualize their ‘home(s)’.

Part Two offers historical and cultural studies perspectives on Asian experiences in the West Indies, in Latin America/Caribbean, in Brazil (as well as in the United States). Among these chapters, the most compelling is Evelyn Hu-DeHart’s comparative analysis of labourers (*huagong*) in Cuba and Peru and merchants (*huashang*) in Mexico. In the former case, she demonstrates the correlation of growing numbers of Chinese labourers with increasing sugar production in Cuba and Peru during the period from the 1840s to the 1870s. In the latter case, she shows how Chinese immigrants developed into a significant commercial force in northern Mexico in the early part of the twentieth century.

Part Three offers four chapters with anthropological perspectives on displacements and diasporas. While offering useful comparative findings from studies in Canada and the United States, none of these authors focus their attention on Latin America. Part Four offers three general essays on the place of Asian studies in U.S. universities, with special attention to their place within ethnic studies programs or traditional discipline-based departments.

The case of *The Japanese in Latin America* is examined by Masterson (with Funada-Classen). This monograph begins with the early Japanese experience as immigrants in Hawaii, Canada, and the United States. In chapter two, the authors discuss the pioneering waves of Japanese immigrants into nineteenth-century Latin America. In the next six chapters, they look at the regional variations in Japanese

population movements in twentieth-century Latin America. The final chapter considers the prospects for the twenty-first century as a contrast of 'healing old wounds' and 'confronting new trends'. Unlike the authors of other books under review here, Masterson and Funada-Classen do not make explicit use of the language of diaspora and transnationalism – in fact, neither term appears in the book's index. Nonetheless, the authors raise the important question of return migration to the Japanese homeland and its corollary: How are Japanese immigrants to Latin America construed as emigrants from their communities of origin? As time and generations pass, the challenges of sustaining 'proper' relations between the Japanese in Latin America and those in Japan have become greater and greater. This is occurring despite the efforts of many Japanese immigrants in Latin America 'to maintain both ethnic and cultural conformity to their Japanese heritage' in light of their 'lack of involvement in the social and political mainstream of their adopted Latin American nations' (p. 286). The authors conclude the 'Afterword' with the hope that 'readers will remember most from this study ... the individual experiences of the Japanese immigrants and their families' (p. 289), and more specifically, that the Japanese in Latin America have 'lived quiet lives of dignity, while confronting hardship and hostility' at the same time that 'they contributed to the well-being of their communities' (p. 290).

The Jewish populations in Latin America also have endeavored to sustain their culture and their religion in the face of hardship and hostility. The year 1492 not only marked the conquest of the Moors by *Los Reyes Católicos* and the arrival of Cristóbal Colón in the New World, it also was the year when Ferdinand and Isabella expelled the Jews from Spain. From that point onward, some Jews gave up their traditions and converted to Roman Catholicism. Others abandoned Spain, a few went underground, and an unknown number tried to make their way clandestinely to Latin America. Not until independent nations were established in the Americas during in the nineteenth century did great numbers of Jewish emigrants/refugees reveal their identities.

In this historical and political context, the volume edited by Kristin Ruggiero on *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean* is most welcome because it complements other sources on the Jewish experience elsewhere (Levy and Weingrod 2005). The thirteen contributions focus on the twentieth century precisely because the authors emphasize the memories of individuals and their communities to uncover and recover the Jewish experience. In her Introduction, Ruggiero suggests that four themes – memory, identity, anti-Semitism, and violence – have dominated the Jewish experience in Latin America. Part I contains three chapters, covering case studies of Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, that focus on the Jewish refugees who fled European fascism in the 1930s and 1940s. The three chapters in Part II treat more recent problems of anti-Semitism, particularly in Argentina. Part III offers four chapters concerned with identity and hybridity, with case studies of Cuba, Martinique, and Mexico. Part IV provides three contributions on 'poeticizing, painting, and writing the pain' about genocide and holocaust.

These diverse chapters enable the reader to touch the 'fragments of memory' that form an important measure of Jewish experience in Latin America and the Caribbean. This interdisciplinary collection assembled by Ruggiero explores and celebrates individual lives and collective Jewishness. One cannot depart the pages of this volume without a deep sense of connecting with a culture committed to survival, even through genocide and holocaust. This is not a volume of numbing sta-

tistics and dry rhetoric; it is a book of passionate commitment to portraying the Jewish presence in twentieth-century Latin America and the Caribbean.

Now, as we shift our gaze from the smallest to the grandest among the books before us, we also reverse our perspective on population mobility and diaspora. Up to this point, we have been considering subjects coming from outside of Latin America to become residents and citizens of its nation states. Now, we turn to a volume whose place of origin is *within* Latin America and whose place of destination is beyond its present geopolitical boundaries.

Diáspora Michoacana was printed in an edition of 2,000 copies, on 135 gram Super Polart matt silk paper, with more than 150 photographic illustrations scattered across its 492 large-format pages. Far more than a beautiful coffee-table book, the volume's scholarly contributions are first-rate, coming mostly from scholars associated with El Colegio de Michoacán and other Mexican institutions. Its contributions are divided into five sections, supplemented by four useful indices (illustrations, key terms, names, and places).

The first section contains four chapters, each of which deals with important elements of the general history and patterns of emigration from the State of Michoacán to the United States. In the first chapter, the volume's editor (Gustavo López Castro) offers a theoretical framework for appreciating how diasporas, circulation, and mobility are related to and grounded in the particular historical situation of Michoacán, a state located in the west-central region of Mexico. This excellent chapter is followed by two intimate views of Michoacán labour migrants in the United States. The first section concludes with a statistical analysis of emigration from Michoacán.

The second section is devoted to three chapters concerned with the circulation of ideas and behaviours. G. Mummert analyzes the family dimension of migrant experiences, giving special attention to gender issues. The following chapter (by G. López Castro and L. Díaz Gómez) looks at children as social actors in the migration process; the last chapter (by M. J. Hernández) in this section considers the relationship between religiosity and emigration.

The third section provides three chapters on the economic and social dimensions of the Michoacán diaspora: two examine the role of remittances in the lives of migrants, their families, and their home communities, while the third treats the question of how transnational emigrant clubs have become involved in local community organizations.

The fourth section contains five chapters, each of which examines an in-depth case study. The three local communities in Michoacán include Chavinda, Cherán, and Santiago Tangamandapio. In addition, the problems of medical care in Chicago and the dangers of crossing the frontier provide vivid evidence of the forgotten victims of emigration.

The final section offers two chapters of special interest to scholars. First, C. Enrique Tapia provides a forty-page assessment of the literature on Michoacán migration. This excellent summary of several decades of research is followed by a forty-page annotated bibliography of the major and minor sources on emigration from Michoacán.

The last volume under consideration here, the edited volume on *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, takes up the issue of diversity in a significant domain of emigration. About 10 per cent of Mexico's national population can be counted as 'indigenous' in terms of language, culture, or place of origin. Never-

theless, indigenous emigrants largely have been 'invisible' to policy makers on both sides of the frontier. No one knows how many indigenous individuals and families have crossed the border to work and live in the United States, but the number is likely to be in the hundreds of thousands. In this context, this volume is a significant effort toward reframing Mexican migration as a multi-ethnic process.

Taken together, the twenty chapters demonstrate that the presumed homogeneity of Hispanic, or even Mexican, migration northward to the United States is a chimera of political and economic convenience. Author upon author shows that indigenous migrants are capable of political action on behalf of themselves, both in their places of origin and in their places of destination. Indeed, indigenous populations are much more likely than are non-indigenous peasants or urban migrants to establish hometown associations. Indigenous groups also more frequently come together to celebrate their hometown festivals and to send remittances to sustain their festivals back at home. Through the Internet and email, indigenous migrants have learned to stay in touch with their hometowns on a continuing basis. In this way, they have given real meaning to the widespread idea of transnational communities.

Beyond the introduction (entitled 'Building Civil Society among Indigenous Migrants'), the volume is divided into five parts. Part I deals with Transnational Indigenous Organizers, with a focus on FIOB (*Frente Indígena Oaxaqueño Binacional*), and then moves on to consider a wide range of cross-border indigenous organizations, most connected to populations from the State of Oaxaca. Part II considers migrant civic and social organizations in Baja California, in Fresno and Los Angeles in the State of California, and in several communities in the State of Oregon. Part III expands the analysis beyond indigenous migrants from Oaxaca to a consideration of general social and economic processes. Although all of the four chapters in this section are valuable, the discussion (by J. Huizar Murillo and I. Cerda) of the problem of 'Hispanic American Indians' in the 2000 U.S. census is particularly illuminating regarding the problems of defining who are indigenous migrants. Part IV offers comparative perspectives on the experiences of Yucatecos and Chiapanecos in San Francisco; P'urépecha migrants in the U.S. rural Midwest; Triqui migrants in Greenfield, California; Hidalguenses in the United States and Mexico; and Mexican immigrants in New York. Finally, Part V contains four chapters that deal with the participation of emigrants in their hometowns of origin, particularly in Oaxaca.

In sum, the twenty chapters in the volume edited by J. Fox and G. Rivera-Salgado (a sociologist of Mixtec heritage) offer valuable insights into the special problems faced and overcome by indigenous migrants from Mexico in the United States. Given their relatively impoverished backgrounds within rural Mexico, they have been quite successful in their individual and collective experiences. Their success raises important questions about ethnic and cultural identity as the nation states of Mexico and the United States continue their confrontations over developing adequate immigration policies in the North and adequate economic and educational programs in the South.

In the recently published *Encyclopedia of Diasporas* (Ember, Ember, and Skoggard 2004), ten chapters are devoted to Latin America population movements. Inbound groups include Africans, Jews, and Japanese; outbound groups include Chileans, Brazilians, Caribbeans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans. Though not an exhaustive list of populations caught up in historical and con-

temporary diasporas, the list is suggestive of the fundamental shift in population flows over the past century.

In this context, the five volumes under review here show us the multiple faces of Latin American diasporas. From ancient times until fairly recently, most populations flowed *into* the region we call Latin America. In recent decades, this long-time pattern of immigration has been reversed. As we enter the twenty-first century, the major population flow is *outbound*, especially toward the United States. In addition, there are growing migration streams toward Canada and Europe.

In these five volumes we experience vicariously the lives of individuals, families, and households participating in the Latin American diasporas. The stories of immigrants and refugees connect thousands of places of origin beyond and within Latin America. Reading these volumes, we comprehend their struggles, we sense their frustrations, and we appreciate the obstacles they labour to overcome. In the end, we know the migrants as our fellow human beings, not just as statistics in a table.

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