

Matsuda, Matt K. *A Primer for Teaching Pacific Histories: Ten Design Principles*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020, 184 pp.

It would not be altogether inaccurate to describe Peru as a Pacific nation whose eyes are clearly turned towards the Atlantic. While there may be solid reasons for our historians to engage in such a practice—the Andes were, after all, colonized by Spaniards—the almost exclusive focus on Atlantic histories cannot be denied. In most of our universities, non-Peruvian history courses (often referred to as «Universal History») are either explicitly or tacitly circumscribed to the histories of Europeans and their descendants. The rest of humanity may occasionally make appearances, but these are often limited to that of the victims or foils of the White «protagonists» of history. This phenomenon is, of course, not necessarily the result of malice, but rather the lack of local specialists in other fields of history who have undergone specialized training in non-Western histories (with the important exception of the Andes, of course). In this respect, the books included in Duke University Press's series *Design Principles for Teaching History*—such as Matt K. Matsuda's *A Primer for Teaching Pacific Histories: Ten Design Principles*—can help fill an important gap among Peruvianist historians who wish to expand the scope of their non-Peruvian history classes beyond the traditional focus on Europeans and their descendants.

A Europeanist by training, Matt Matsuda is a Professor of History at Rutgers University. His turn towards the Pacific came later in his academic career, and hence his personal trajectory rhymes with that of the target audience for his book: university instructors seeking to teach their first course on Pacific histories. His book accomplishes this objective well, providing its readers with a roadmap towards what such a class can look like, along with resources and perspectives that they can implement in the classroom.



Matsuda points out that unlike the «Atlantic World», the Pacific lacks that standard narrative that the university instructor and student may be familiar with, which they may choose to follow or push back against. Thus, it is up to the instructor to come up with what exactly the Pacific is or will be for the purposes of their class. Matsuda makes it clear that everything in his book are just suggestions that may be taken wholesale or picked apart, but in this respect, he does well to immediately move away from the «Pacific Rim» perspective of Pacific histories. This approach focuses almost exclusively on North America, East Asia, and sometimes, Southeast Asia, often propelled by a very strong economicist rationale; that is, a logic whereby studying the history of countries such as Japan or China is important because of their economic might, rather than because of any intrinsic value of their cultures or history. This logic is not foreign to us in Peru, nor is the fact that it is never applied to Western history: note the contrast with how no one in our country ever praises the study of the Greeks or Romans in terms of Greece's or Italy's GDPs. The economicist emphasis on the «Pacific Rim» has the deleterious effect of erasing entire peoples, such as the island nations of the Pacific, due to their perceived economic insignificance. Matsuda instead calls for doing an interconnected history of the peoples of the entire basin, including Oceanians, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, and, of course, European and European-descended colonizers.

Matsuda discusses the different chronological framings that one can use in class. While Iberianist scholars might choose the 16th century of Magellan as the starting point of «Pacific History», scholars of France or the United Kingdom may instead choose the 18th century of their own explorers and scientists as its starting point. Americanists, on the other hand, might instead think about the 19th century of Commodores Perry and Dewey. Matsuda instead advocates moving away from such Western-centric framings and to instead start with the Pacific peoples from periods several centuries before Europeans or their descendants first entered this ocean. In order to do so, Matsuda suggests incorporating the tools and perspectives of anthropology, archaeology, and performing arts into the history classroom—an approach that our ethnohistorically-

informed Peruvianists are well suited to practice. Of course, European imperialism would eventually become a major factor driving Pacific histories, but rather than thinking about it as a foundational moment, he emphasizes the need for us to teach the degree to which the peoples of the Pacific were dynamic and interconnected well before those intrusions. For the achievement of these objectives, Chapter 10 points out numerous movies, compilations of primary sources, collections of maps, and online museum collections that may be effectively used in the course.

A reader in Peru would have to retool some of the content in Matsuda's book, however. As is natural, he writes mostly for a North American audience, and hence his suggestions to direct students towards museum collections with collections of artifacts from Pacific societies, or to interview members of Pacific diasporas or military veterans who fought in conflicts in the region might prove difficult to implement. Furthermore, his frequent references to business- or life science-oriented students in the classroom may seem unusual for a Peruvian instructor in a "niche" class such as this, where the vast majority (if not the entirety) of students would be aspiring historians. Perhaps the biggest retooling that a Peruvian instructor might have to make relates to Matsuda's turn away from the «Pacific Rim» concept. While there is much to be said for it, large parts of the book seem to turn very heavily towards a Pacific Islander approach, with a healthy dose of East Asians and Southeast Asians thrown in the mix. The Americas, on the other hand, have a much more subdued presence. The west coast of North America, for example, seems to be in the Pacific, *but not of it*. There are a few references to west coast dynamics, such as Josh Reid's study of the Makah, but North Americans appear mostly as an outside force (which, to be fair, is not altogether inaccurate) acting through imperialism and tourism. As to Latin America, while it is true that the Manila Galleons loom large, once they are cut off, the region hardly surfaces again, except for a few quick mentions, such as the guano trade or a call to study Tierra del Fuego and Tasmania in comparative perspective. Fortunately, for a Peruvianist, this would be the easiest gap to fill.

Overall, Duke University Press's *Design Principles for Teaching History* series appears to be a promising starting point for Peruvian university instructors to diversify their course offerings. While *A Primer for Teaching Pacific Histories* might sometimes read as a (richly) annotated syllabus that allows one to recreate Matt Matsuda's class—rather than providing one with the *Principles* promised in the series title that would give one the foundation to critically create one's own class—it certainly gives a non-specialist the tools to get started, and as such continues to be a valuable resource for universities in Peru.

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