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Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History by Kathleen López
(review)

Fredy González

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and attorney Faustino Galicia Chimalpopoca to recognize his role as a defender of native rights at a time when the term “native” had disappeared from the rhetoric of citizenship. A plea to prevent the disappearance of the Nahuatl language today then follows, in a poetic Nahuatl passage written by Victoriano de la Cruz Cruz of the University of Warsaw, Poland.

Chapter 4 examines doña Luz Jiménez, a twentieth-century Nahua woman who served as a model for the artist Diego Rivera and others; she was a teacher, and an informant for reputable anthropologists and linguists including Fernando Horcasitas. McDonough argues that her “intellectualism was grounded . . . in the local reality of her community and her lived experience, and bolstered by the fact that she was capable of sharing this knowledge with outsiders” (p. 134). Significantly, this chapter reveals doña Luz’s insights into the assimilative education forced upon Nahuas, and complements that with similar ones derived from recent Reading Circles conducted with native speakers at IDIEZ, and that of Sabina Cruz de la Cruz, a contemporary Nahua scholar.

Ildefonso Maya Hernández is the subject of the final chapter, which employs his play, *Ixtlamatinij* (*The Learned Ones*), first performed in 1987, to highlight again the past and present discrimination against spoken Nahuatl and “Indian-ness.” Overall McDonough’s work exposes its readers to myriad disciplines and time periods to reveal in a very real way the life and tenacity of Nahuatl and its speakers, and the important role they played and continue to play as intellectuals.

Assumption College
Worcester, Massachusetts

MARK CHRISTENSEN

GLOBAL/TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY

Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History. By Kathleen López. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Pp. ix, 339. Illustrations. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \$69.95 cloth; \$29.95 paper.
doi:[10.1017/tam.2015.17](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2015.17)

The hundred years between the beginning of the coolie trade and the Cuban revolution were tumultuous ones for the Chinese Cuban community. Domestic and international political changes, including the advent of the Chinese and Cuban republics, US hegemony over the island, and the Chinese and Cuban socialist revolutions, would present challenges for Chinese migrants and their families on both sides of the Pacific. Yet, as Kathleen López argues in *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History*, Chinese Cubans nonetheless carved out a sense of belonging in both countries, “alter[ing] both official and popular conceptions of what it meant to be Chinese or Cuban in different contexts” (p. 5).

Chinese Cubans is a comprehensive work on Chinese migration to the island during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. López tracks successive waves of Chinese migrants, including the coolie trade of the second half of the nineteenth century, the influx of agricultural workers at the conclusion of the First World War, and the exodus from mainland China after 1949. Throughout her study, López skillfully examines how migrants maintained transnational ties—not only to China, but also to other Chinese communities in the Americas—yet nonetheless asserted a place for themselves within the Cuban nation.

Of particular interest is López's documentation of cross-cultural alliances that Chinese Cubans maintained with Afro-Cubans during the nineteenth century, which in part stemmed from similar treatment from white overseers. Once freed from their onerous labor contracts, former slaves and former coolies settled in similar locales, often intermarrying with each other. Chinese also participated in the wars for Cuban independence, many enticed by promises of freedom. López's findings not only challenge a historiography that has seen little potential for Chinese migrants to form such interethnic alliances, but also implicitly challenge assertions that Chinese Cubans were unable to integrate into Cuban society. Indeed, López's search beyond the hateful writings of elite white Cubans, who doubted the ability of Chinese to integrate, restores a sense of agency to the migrants themselves.

López's findings are built on an impressive array of sources, obtained in national and local archives and libraries in the People's Republic of China, Cuba, and the United States, as well as Spanish- and Chinese-language newspapers published in Cuba and overseas Chinese periodicals that circulated throughout the diaspora. In addition, remittance records, memoirs, and travel narratives allow López to craft a detailed portrait of Chinese migrants and their associations in the country. López contextualizes her work in the literatures on both the Chinese diaspora and aspects of race in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The temporal and geographical ground that López is able to cover in a single monograph is impressive. At the same time, *Chinese Cubans* raises tantalizing questions for future work. For example, did Chinese participate in organizations created by Cubans of color in the twentieth century? If not, did Chinese Cuban periodicals such as *Fraternidad* criticize such cross-race political activity? Additionally, López's work raises fascinating questions about the Chinese community after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Did Chinese Cuban exiles participate in exile political activity, or were they shunned by the Cuban exile community?

Without question, however, *Chinese Cubans* is one of the best monographs on Asian migration to the Americas and makes a major impact on the literature on migration and race in Latin America. As a work that fills a major gap in our knowledge of the Chinese diaspora in the Caribbean, it will be of use to historians of the greater Chinese diaspora as well. Authoritative yet accessible, it would make a wonderful addition to reading lists

for advanced undergraduate or graduate courses on Latin American or Cuban history, Asian diasporas, and ethnic studies.

University of Colorado Boulder
Boulder, Colorado

FREDY GONZÁLEZ

Mexico, Nation in Transit: Contemporary Representations of Mexican Migration to the United States. By Christina L. Sisk. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011. Pp. ix, 232. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$50.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.
 doi:[10.1017/tam.2015.18](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2015.18)

Christina L. Sisk's brilliant book treats contemporary migratory movements of Mexicans to the United States as they relate to identity formations inside and outside of national boundaries. Her study comprises an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion, wherein she explores the world of migrants traveling from different areas of Mexico to the United States. She focuses her analysis on migrant representations in music, literature, and film, arguing that these visual and auditory images relate to nationalist projects as well as to conceptualizations and constructions of Mexican identity or *mexicanidad*.

Sisk makes use of anthropological and sociological studies in her examination of these artistic genres to assert that cultural production does not arise, or exist, in a vacuum but is situated in historical and social contexts. The author focuses on three basic "producers" of cultural images as these relate to the migrant in the period encompassing 1990 through 2010: (1) Mexicans from Mexico or Mexican imaginaries, (2) the migrants themselves, and (3) the children of migrants who although born or raised in the United States still look to Mexico for their cultural identity, particularly in times of increased hostility to Mexicans, such as the efforts to build support for anti-immigrant legislation like Proposition 187 (California) and SB 1070 (Arizona).

The central thesis encoded in the title of the book indicates that due to sustained migratory movements, Mexico continues to be a nation in flux. This state of being "in transit" is of course characteristic of all nations due to contemporary globalization processes. However, for Mexico, a poor country neighboring a powerful and wealthy nation, it is doubly significant. Mexico, unlike other nations, has experienced sustained migratory movement from the middle of the nineteenth century until the present twenty-first century.

The author's goal in this excellent study is to capture that elusive movement of people in time and space through Mexican and Mexican American imaginaries. In her theoretically sophisticated introduction, she applies paradigms articulated by Ernesto García Canclini and Arjun Appadurai to develop her own thesis regarding how artistic