

# Globalization of Latin American Studies in the Intertwined Network

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## ABSTRACT

### **Globalization of Latin American Studies in the Intertwined Network**

Globalization of Latin American studies gives valuable impetus to already stagnating Japanese Latin American studies. If it is more challenging to be an all-in-one Latin American studies scholar nowadays, then it would be helpful to consider research networks of various scales: local, field (Latin America), global, and regional (Asia). Globalization is also expected to expand diversity in Latin American studies. We have much to learn from studying Latin American experiences. Global Latin American studies can provide great richness in diversity.

**Keywords:** Network, Collaboration, Asian Latin American Studies

## INTRODUCTION

The four articles presented in this volume by Yun-Joo Park, Guo Jie, Melba Falck, and me derived from an online mini-symposium held on November 14, 2020 on the topic of “Globalization of Latin American Studies: Perspectives from East Asia,” as a part of the 57th Annual Conference of the Japan Society of Social Science on Latin America (JSLA). The mini-symposium was also promoted by the East Asian Network of Latin American Studies (EANLAS). Park, Guo, and Hamaguchi had collaborated to coordinate EANLAS since 2014 when they met at the Annual Conference of the Latin American Studies Association of Korea (LASAK). Falck was specially invited to contribute as a commentator.

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She has contributed notably to Asian studies in Latin America through her outstanding scholarly works and also as an editor of the journal *México y la Cuenca del Pacífico*. Isamu Okada of Nagoya University chaired the mini-symposium.

The symposium's theme was motivated by a remark made by Professor Aldo Panfichi Huamán of Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, who participated in the Kobe Seminar of EANLAS held in January 2017. In his speech, in the capacity at that time of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) president-elect, he emphasized globalization of Latin American studies. Globalization is expected to contribute to the diversification of perspectives in Latin American studies. Asian and Latin American scholars were able to collaborate broadly to compare the social development experiences and to share the beliefs on the importance of local values. However, Asian scholars have remained on the sidelines of Latin American studies. If Latin American studies continue to be dominated by scholars of Western countries and Latin America, then research advances will be restrained, held back from leaping to escape the prevailing north-south view of the world.

We live in a world where international relations have become increasingly diverse. A growing consensus holds that the 21st century will be the Pacific Century (Clinton 2011), in which Asian countries will harness economic growth. Technological advances in transportation and communications have lifted a *distance curse* that divided Asia and Latin America. Latin America has become increasingly enmeshed with Asia-Pacific economic integration. Asian countries have a bolder presence in Latin America and are reconfiguring globalization strategies with Latin America posed in a mainstream relation (Hamaguchi et al. 2018).

Latin American studies constitute a branch of area studies. As a broad research field, area studies were born from the intelligence and military imperatives of the United States during and after World War II (Cummings 1997). As the Cold War ended, area studies' importance as a tool for the machinations of the hegemonic countries has diminished. Scholars have devoted efforts to identify each country's unique factors restraining social progress from a historical and socio-cultural context. Social progress has been understood as adaptation to liberal democracy and a competitive market economy, which have become a single norm in post-Cold War globalism. Local uniqueness exotic to the Euro-Ameri-centric orthodox academic disciplines has not been seriously considered. The evaluation of globalization to date is mixed, even judging favorably. It has created

diverse opportunities for less developed parts of the world, but severe local tensions have also emerged.

Area studies have become a lively field of debate between the global norm and local values. However, when the global norm and local values are conflicting, it has remained unclear how to adjust the former incorporating implications from the latter. Compared to area studies under the earlier paradigm, which directly subsidized national intelligence and big business profits, the post-Cold War area studies' aims have become obscure.

Area studies should be reinvented to contribute to global governance construction in the recent era of globalization. Instead of the globalization from above (i.e., imposition of global norms as a unique model), alternative globalization from below as an implication from area studies is highly anticipated. The alternative strategy should depart from the single politico-economic model and academic euro-ameri-centrism. It should embrace heterogeneity, multilateralism, and regionalism. In this regard, Professor Panfichi's remark about globalizing Latin American studies is well-timed for the Pacific Century era. Asia and Latin America face each other directly from their perspectives, not through the lens of western hegemony.

Against this background, the mini-symposium addressed the following questions. What are the merits of the Latin American research by a researcher from East Asia who is neither from Latin America nor from Europe/US, a historical stakeholder in the region? How will such studies contribute to the globalization of Latin American studies?

The remaining part of this article will present my views on these questions from a Japanese standpoint.

## **LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES IN JAPAN: A NEW VIGOR**

Early works on Japanese scholars mentioned Latin America for the enlightenment of the people. Although presenting inaccurate and imaginary perspectives about Brazil and Argentinean Patagonia from conversations with Italian missionaries, the first mention of Latin America was readily apparent in *Seijo Kibun (Study of the Occident)*, written by a medieval Cheng-Zhu scholar and politician Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725). Next, *Sekai Kunizukushi (Countries in the World, 1869)* by the early modern scholar

and writer Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) includes book contents regarded as a translation of foreign books. Having established diplomatic relations with Latin American countries<sup>1</sup>, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and private individuals related to emigration enterprises<sup>2</sup> produced comprehensive reports describing Latin American countries. Pre-World War II studies of Latin America were strongly motivated by emigration.

In the post-World War II era, University of Tokyo archaeologists took a leading role in Latin American studies, starting from their scientific expedition to the Andes in 1956<sup>3</sup>. In light of the area's linguistic commonality, language and literature scholars formed another group of scholars supporting early research and education in Latin American studies as an interdisciplinary field of humanities and social sciences. Since the 1990s, establishment of international studies departments has become a boom among Japanese universities in response to Japanese society's demand for learning more about other countries. These programs have almost always included courses on Latin America.

Figure 1 depicts the government research fund's evolution granted to Latin American studies provided by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). It shows an upward trend in the number and the value of grants until the mid-2010s. Various generations of Latin American studies in Japan have produced enormous amounts of knowledge. Recent studies of globally spreading populism and authoritarianism often refer to Latin Americanists' earlier works. Economists regularly cite Latin America when discussing future risks of sovereign bankruptcy and widening income disparities in Japan. Some Japanese scholars' works have become key literature in Latin America. Among them, most notable are Matsushita (1983) on the labor-union influence on Peronism's genesis in Argentina, and Murakami (2012) on Peruvian electoral authoritarian populism of the Fujimori era. Hosono (2016; 2018) advocates the combination of Latin America's natural resource advantages and Japanese technical cooperation in the comparative development policy perspectives.

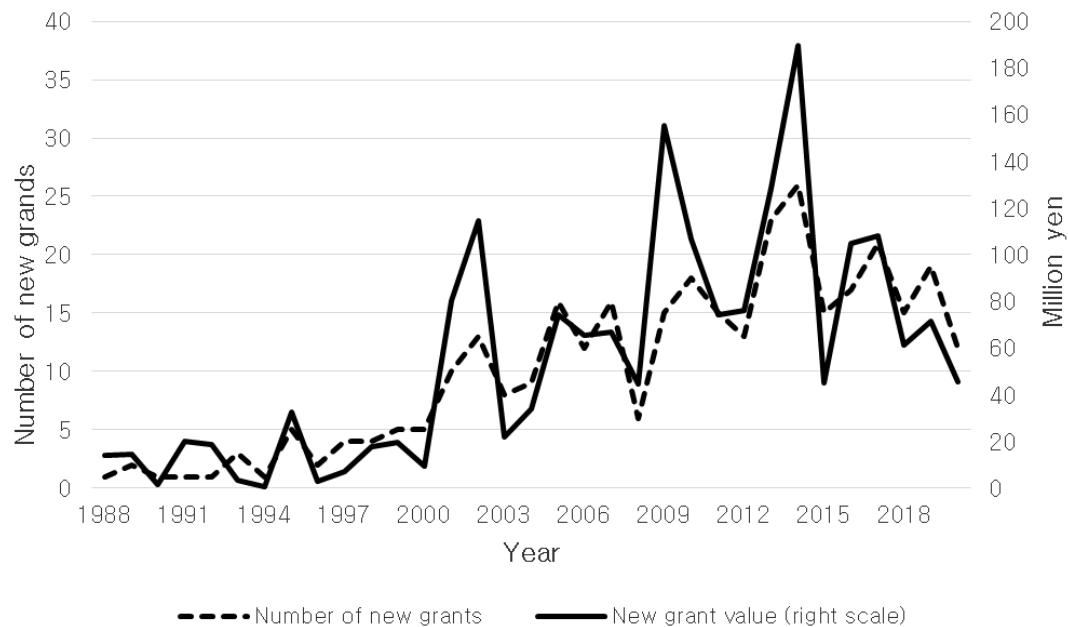
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1 Japan established diplomatic relations with Latin American countries in the late 19th century in the following order: Peru (1873), Mexico (1888), Brazil (1895), Chile (1897), and Argentina (1898).

2 Pioneer Latin America in the early 20th century included reports by Mizuno Ryo, Yokoyama Gennosuke, and Aoyagi Ikutaro, all related to emigration enterprises.

3 Kingsberg (2014) describes that Japan rejoined the global academic community with the pre-Inca archaeological study, a research in the United States "backyard" and also free from discredited prewar legacies of colonialism and expansionism, on a topic of historical significance to Europeans.

Tsunekawa (2019) highlights a critical difference in Asia Latin America's social systems engendering economic performance gaps. The maturity of earlier studies benefits us.



Source: Author's elaboration based on KAKEN homepage <https://kaken.nii.ac.jp/jp/>

Figure 1. JSPS research grants to Latin American studies: numbers and values by year.

However, JSPS grants have declined in recent years. Japanese Latin Americanists are also concerned that journals published by two academic societies, the Japan Association for Latin American Studies (JALAS) and the Japan Society of Social Science on Latin America (JSLA), have received fewer paper submissions in recent years.

The lack of dynamism of current Latin American studies is a part of area studies stagnation despite encouragement by the Japanese government and the leading bodies of Japanese academia. They have issued a guiding principle to promote interdisciplinary area studies<sup>4</sup>. Area studies require that scholars work diligently to specialize in both their discipline and a region. An economist who had a model and data would be able to write a paper on Brazil without visiting the country. A language

4 In June 2002, the Council of Science, Technology, and Academia of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology issued a policy report on the promotion of humanities and social sciences. The report highlighted area studies as an invaluable arena of far-reaching academic collaboration with broad and interdisciplinary approach to study areas of multiple levels from global to local including Asia, the Americas, and Islamic areas.

specialist in Spanish or Portuguese could accurately report everyday occurrences in Latin America. Nevertheless, they would be able to gain deep insights only by broadening their expertise to integrate scientific disciplines and expert observations of the region. For young scholars who compete for academic positions, time is so valuable for composing papers for journals that they remain aloof from area studies to emphasize disciplines. Moreover, a mid-career scholar might not be successful in being proficient at a language.

Despite the gloomy prospects, we should not distrust the growing reality that Latin American studies have become regarded as less important. However, we have much to learn from studying Latin American experiences in paths to democracy, social justice, overcoming hunger, food production revolution to sustain future food demand, the environment, and development. We can also learn from greater understanding of the complex and divided world of today. Latin America will be a key global player in the recognition and resolution of these issues.

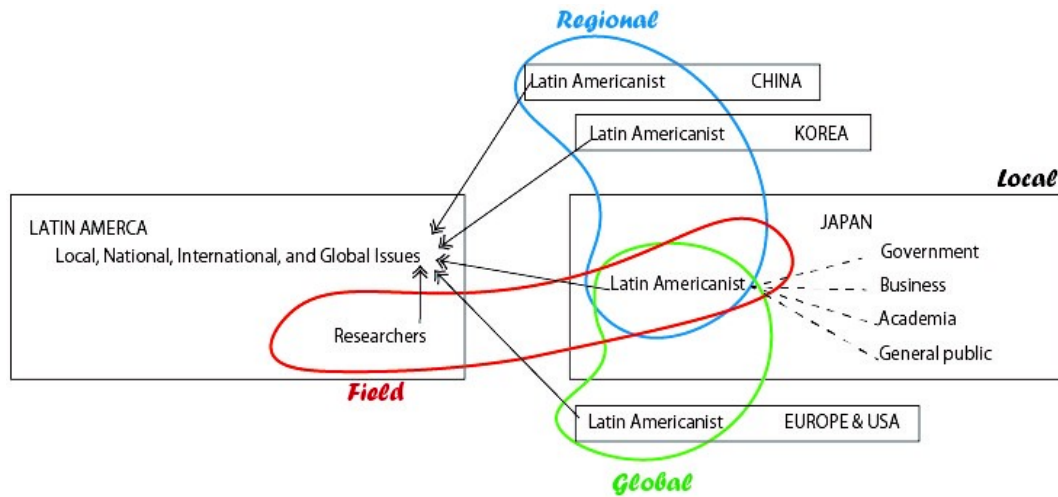
If it is more challenging to be an all-in-one Latin American studies scholar nowadays, then it would be helpful to consider networking to gain new vigor. The next section presents discussion of the importance of Latin American studies' globalization and research networks.

## **GLOBALIZATION AND NETWORKING OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES**

We argue that Latin American studies can develop in intertwined networks as depicted in Figure 2. Here, we will discuss Japan's context, but we believe that our argument is generally valid.

One can start with the local network, which helps develop the uniqueness of Japanese Latin American studies. Global Latin American studies can be expected to provide great richness in diversity. Whereas diversity is based on individual characteristics, they tend to reflect a country's background as reflected in the opinions of government, business, academia, and general public. Scholars actively appeal to receive research funding support. These entities get takeaways from research outputs of Latin American studies.

Next, the network with Latin American scholars is crucially important. For Japanese scholars, the great distance to Latin America has always constituted an important barrier hindering field studies. The recent advent



Source: Author's elaboration

Figure 2. Globalization of Latin American Studies will evolve through intertwined networks.

of internet communication tools and inexpensive international flights have made exchanges of ideas much easier. The JSPS provides a matching fund for international joint studies to allay some Japanese scholars' costs. Moreover, Latin American scholars' growing willingness to write in English, in response to the research evaluation system, facilitates production of research output jointly, promoting incentives for sharing tasks. Collaborative research topics extend beyond Latin American local matters and Japan – Latin America bilateral issues to global questions involving Japan and Latin America.

As the third component of the networks, Japanese Latin Americanists will engage the global research network more actively. Although Latin America has been an important area of United States influence and historical significance to Europeans, it is also a prospective partner of the imminent Asia–Pacific community. By contributing new perspectives and additional research funds, the global Latin American studies community will embrace the field's globalization with Asian scholars' more active participation. Latin American studies provide unique insights into global humanity's current issues based on the region's historical and cultural background.

Last but not least, Asian regional cooperation in Latin American studies can be fostered as a venue for exchanging views with similar historical backgrounds and cultural values. The short distances in the region simplify interactions for mutual learning. Establishing a formal mechanism for cooperation can be expected to enhance the visibility of Asian scholars

in the global research network. The East Asian Network for Latin American Studies we launched seven years ago is a first step in that direction.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This short essay was aimed at motivating the globalization of Latin American studies for two reasons. One is to give valuable impetus to already stagnating Japanese Latin American studies. We understand that being an expert in both disciplines and the region is challenging, especially for young scholars. Even if it is difficult to be an all-in-one area study scholar to meet scholarly work evaluation requisites, a person can obtain supplementary external resources from research networks of various scales: local, field (Latin America), global, and regional (Asia). Another reason is to expand diversity in global Latin American studies. Because of the original objectives, area studies in general had been under the influence of hegemonic countries' intelligence and military interests. Globalization of Latin American studies is necessary for the academic maturity of the subject. We believe that they can provide unique insights into global humanity's current issues based on the region's historical and cultural background.

We consider that development of collaboration of Latin Americanists in China, Korea, and other Asian countries will benefit to a considerable degree from expanding mutual learning opportunities. Collaboration is also meant to enhance the visibility of Asian Latin American studies in the global research network.



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