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The Promise of the Pacific: Chile, Japan, and Nation-Building with Nitrate in the Pacific World

By

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requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

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By

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This dissertation examines Chilean relations with Japan from their founding in the 1890s to their wartime rupture in the early 1940s. During this period, numerous Chilean officials, diplomats, businessmen, and intellectuals attempted to reorient Chile's national sodium nitrate fertilizer industry towards Japan. These officials believed that if they could open massive, untapped fertilizer markets in Japan and contract Japanese workers to mitigate Chile's labor shortage, they could reverse the fortunes of a formerly booming but currently fading industry and fund their state. Simultaneously, these Pacific-minded actors argued that Japan also offered a compatible blueprint for development among nations on the geopolitical periphery through which Chileans could model their nationhood and achieve autonomy from European and US interventionism. Yet, as they pursued this Pacific pivot for commerce and development, Chileans contended with racial anxieties about Asia that proliferated throughout the Americas in this period. They fiercely debated the prospect of an influx of Japanese immigrant laborers for the nitrate industry and worried about protecting Chile's self-declared exceptional white homogeneity.

I build several key arguments and interpretations throughout this dissertation. First, I divert from the scholarly trend of viewing Latin American nation-building through the shadow of North Atlantic imperialism by illustrating how Chileans sought to integrate with Japan in the Pacific as they pursued development and as a method for contesting North Atlantic power. Second, I argue that Chilean visions for commerce, labor, and sovereignty through relations with Japan mapped onto and intensified local and national contests over what historians describe as Chile's social question—the bitter contest to set the terms for Chilean nationhood waged between workers, elites, and the state. I thus introduce racial and international concerns into scholarly conversations on Chile that often focus exclusively on class or gender within predominantly national frameworks. And finally, this dissertation offers a new way of approaching the transition between Latin America's nineteenth-century era defined by export-driven development models to the rise of nationalist movements in the 1920s and 1930s. Seen through Chile's Pacific project to turn Japan into a, if not the, principal international relationship for Chile, this transition was neither smooth nor sudden (that is, emerging only with the Great Depression) and it was not a foregone conclusion that it would be the US who would outlast Britain and Japan to capture unchallenged dominance in Latin America and the Pacific.

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## Introduction

This dissertation tells a history of Latin America from the Pacific. Though better known for their trans-Atlantic political and economic networks, the Americas have also maintained consequential relations with peoples and states surrounding the Pacific Ocean. My research situates Latin America in the Pacific World, while building on the innovations of Atlantic World scholarship in bringing new actors and entanglements into Latin American and international history.

I examine the case study of Chilean relations with Japan from their founding in the 1890s to the early 1940s when the relationship ruptured during wartime. Across these decades, cohorts of Chilean diplomat-businessmen, intellectuals, and other elite nationalists advocated for Chile to reorient its principal industry in sodium nitrate fertilizer towards Japan. (I use the term diplomat-businessmen because in their diplomatic posts in Japan, Chilean officials also worked for and with Chile's parastatal nitrate producing conglomerates to advance nitrate commerce in Asia.) These actors believed that if they could open massive, untapped fertilizer markets in Japan and contract Japanese workers to mitigate the nitrate industry's labor shortages, they could reverse the fortunes of a formerly booming but currently fading industry upon which the state depended for revenue. I describe this project to extend commercial, diplomatic, and labor relations with Japan as Chile's "Pacific vision." This term captures the actors' contentions that Chile and Japan shared unique compatibilities in maritime geography, commerce, economic development, and international relations that could be mobilized and aligned to resolve some of the most urgent concerns in both states.

Chilean sodium nitrate (also known as saltpeter or *salitre* in Spanish) is refined from nitrogen-rich caliche ores. The Earth's only natural reserves of these ores were discovered in the nineteenth century to be embedded in varying layers, sizes, colors, and chemical compositions in subterranean deposits under Chile's Atacama Desert. Primarily utilized as fertilizer, Chilean nitrate reached planters, workers, and states across the globe in mass quantities by the end of the century to reverse soil deficiencies and revitalize agricultural production. Globally, nitrate helped fuel the final stages of industrialization by enabling modernizing states to feed their rapidly expanding populations. And in Latin America and Chile, the industry was emblematic of the export-driven development models that defined the region's late nineteenth-century; taxing nitrate exports accounted for the vast majority of Chilean government revenues since the 1880s.<sup>1</sup> Nitrate was thus invaluable until it was not: by the 1900s and 1910s the industry began to fail, and this unleashed an existential crisis for Chile's economy and politics.<sup>2</sup> Overproduction,

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<sup>1</sup> Nitrogen enables plants to perform photosynthesis and to build proteins, and all plants possess a naturally self-replenishing source of nitrogen within broader atmospheric nitrogen nutrient cycles. Yet, the nineteenth century's population explosion and input intensive agriculture stripped soils across the US, Europe, and Asia of their nitrogen reserves and irreparably disrupted nitrogen cycles. See Edward Melillo, "The First Green Revolution: Debt Peonage and the Making of the Nitrogen Fertilizer Trade, 1840–1930" *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (October 1, 2012): 1028–1060. Gregory Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Kristin Wintersteen, *The Fishmeal Revolution: The Industrialization of the Humboldt Current* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> For the crisis of the nitrate industry see Sergio González Miranda, "Auge y crisis del nitrato Chileno: La importancia de los viajeros, empresarios, y científicos, 1830-1919," *Tiempo Histórico* no. 2 (2011): 159-178. Luis Andrés Iturra Valenzuela, "La frontera tarapaqueña y sus territorialidades desde la crisis salitrera hasta la década dorada (1919-1960)," *Polis* no. 51 (2018): 1-18. Sergio González Miranda, and Diego Lizama Gavilán, "La COSACH y la crisis de la industria salitrera: un intento de estanco comercial (1927-1934)," *Tiempo Histórico* 12 no. 22 (enero 2021): 39-55.

stockpiling, declining prices abroad, and, especially, competition from European synthetic nitrogen all converged to strip Chilean nitrate of its former monopolies over global nitrogen and fertilizer markets.

It was in this context that the Pacific vision was born. In an effort to prop up this crucial industry beginning in the 1890s and even more urgently by the 1910s, the Chilean officials who were stationed in Japan came to propose that Japan could become a colossal market for chemical fertilizer, a market that could alone perhaps consume the entirety of Chile's annual nitrate production. Chilean nitrate sales in Japan began averaging about a few thousand metric tons annually in the early 1900s, before reaching annual consumption in the tens of thousands of metric tons by the 1920s and 1930s. Nitrate sales peaked in the early 1940s with consumption that reached 70,000-100,000 metric tons per year.

But the appeal of the Pacific was not only economic. What began as practical calls for Japanese markets to rescue the nitrate industry—and, ultimately, Chile's economy—quickly morphed into something more: a deliberate effort to replicate Japan's formula for combatting dependency and fortifying economic sovereignty. Chilean Pacific visionaries saw in Meiji Japan a rapidly modernizing and powerful nation that just had evaded becoming dependent on the very same Anglo-American economic interventionism that continued to thwart Chilean sovereignty. Though few similarities actually linked Chile and Japan, some Chileans argued that Japan offered an inspiring example of how formerly subjugated nations could retrieve control of and manage their own economies to the benefit of the nation. Though Chile profited from the nitrate industry by taxing nitrate exports, the industry was dominated by foreign firms and investors (predominantly British) who retained the majority of profits. In building a theoretically more equitable and durable nitrate chain with Japanese firms, shippers, and consumers than the ones Chile had with the British and the Americans (in markets that were evaporating), Chile could both recover its slipping nitrate revenues and reinforce its economic sovereignty.

Yet, as they pursued this Pacific pivot for commerce and development, Chileans contended with racial anxieties about Asia that proliferated throughout the Americas. Chileans fiercely debated the prospect of an influx of Japanese immigrant laborers for the nitrate industry and worried about protecting Chile's self-declared regionally exceptional white homogeneity. Most Pacific visionaries contended that intensively-regulated Japanese labor immigration could provide just the jolt that the nitrate industry needed to recover its former pace of production and capture new markets, particularly in Asia. Other Chilean elites, by contrast, could not stomach the prospect of Chile following in the footsteps of Peru, Brazil, or California whose tens of thousands of Japanese migrant workers they saw as producing racial and social disorder.

### **Arguments and Historiography**

Approaching Chilean history from the Pacific, this dissertation makes three overarching interventions into Latin American international and national histories. First, scholarship on Latin American nation-building and development during this period typically focuses on Latin Americans' either admiration or rejection of the US and Europe.<sup>3</sup> By foregrounding the Chileans who advocated instead for a Pacific pivot for Chilean development, my work offers fresh

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<sup>3</sup> A few recent examples include Amy Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Development States in the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). Casey Lurtz, *From the Grounds Up: Building an Export Economy in Southern Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019). Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021). Margarita Fajardo, *The World that Latin America Created: The United Nations Economic Mission for Latin America in the Development Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022).

insights into how some Latin American elites sought alternatives to North Atlantic power. Taking a cue from historian Adom Getachew's notion of "anti-colonial worldmaking" among Black anglophone and Pan-African intellectuals who linked domestic development to the overturning of empire in the international sphere, I argue that some Chileans cultivated a similar vision for the Pacific in the early twentieth-century.<sup>4</sup> Pacific visionaries were certain that assembling an autonomous political economic system in the Pacific and reproducing Japan's model for sturdy nationhood at home would insulate Chile from US and European economic imperialism. These actors thus attempted to recast themselves as protagonists in the Pacific, rather than as disadvantaged supplicants to the US and Britain. In other words, the Pacific vision captures a story of Latin American nation-building outside of the shadow of North Atlantic imperialism.

Second, this dissertation tells a new social history of Chilean international relations. I assert that the question of investing in relations with Japan and particularly of Japanese labor immigration mapped onto and impacted local and national debates already underway in Chile over what historians describe as Chile's "social question," the bitter contest to set the terms for Chilean nationhood waged between workers, elites, and the state. Scholars typically approach Chile's twentieth-century and the social question through predominantly national frameworks in which class and perhaps gender are the principal, if not exclusive, theaters of social conflict.<sup>5</sup> This dissertation, by contrast, demonstrates that asking how Chileans positioned themselves against others, in this case in Japan, was critical for determining how Chileans defined their national racial community and imagined the nation's past, present, and future. From the streets of Chile's northern nitrate port cities to the highest levels of Chilean diplomacy, Chileans hotly contested the implications of Japanese immigration for the national community. In other words, the Pacific vision offers a means of moving between Chile's local social, national, and international histories that are usually told separately, and of bringing race into Chilean historical narratives.

Third, the Pacific vision helps fill in the story of Latin American development between the rise of export boom-reliant economies in the second half of the nineteenth century and the global economic collapse of 1929. The 1930s saw a new generation of populist, protectionist leaders ascend to power who initiated domestic industrialization, protectionism, and advocated for economic sovereignty. The aging literature—primarily published in the 1970s and 1980s within debates over the arrival or maturation of capitalism in Latin America—implies that this

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<sup>4</sup> Adom Getachew, *World-Making After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> On political and class conflict in Chile in the twentieth century, see Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (Oxford University Press, 1989). Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). Sandra Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). Patrick Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile: Cultural Politics, Nationalism, and the Rise of the Middle Class* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). Angela Vergara, *Copper Workers, International Business, and Domestic Politics in Cold War Chile* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). Jody Pavilack, *Mining for the Nation: The Politics of Chile's Coal Communities from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011). Raymond Craib, *The Cry of the Renegade: Politics and Poetry in Interwar Chile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Camilo Trumper, *Ephemeral Histories: Public Art, Politics, and the Struggle for the Streets in Chile* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

shift happened suddenly, as a consequence of the shock of the Depression.<sup>6</sup> Even for Chile, where the “crisis” is understood to have preceded 1929 with the bust of the nitrate industry in the 1910s, there is still a sense that the main response was populism and protectionism.

I complicate that narrative. In pursuing a nitrate commodity chain with Japan, Chileans tested out new and innovative ways to shore up the fragile consensus around export-driven development, aristocratic politics, and vaguely social Darwinist ideas that had coalesced by the 1870s and 1880s. The Pacific vision represents one such attempt to cling to export-driven development, but it had a modern dimension in that it sought out a new, similarly anti-Anglo-American trading partner in Japan and because it also relied upon nationalist aspirations that would later power Latin American populists. Commerce with Japan would boost the nitrate economy while simultaneously enabling Chileans to retrieve their economic sovereignty from North Atlantic capital. In sum, the Pacific vision represents an ultimately failed effort to revitalize the classic nineteenth-century model of growth—the promotion of and reliance on exports—that was already by the 1890s showing systemic flaws, while simultaneously reducing Chile’s dependence on European and US markets and to reinforce Chile’s sovereignty.

Furthermore, by telling the story from Chile and the Pacific, this dissertation elaborates a new interpretation of the familiar transition between the nineteenth century’s *Pax Britannica* and the twentieth century’s *Pax Americana*. As the story goes, sometime during the 1910s and particularly after 1919, the US usurped Britain as the dominant imperial power and arbiter of international affairs in Latin America and beyond.<sup>7</sup> British firms, finance capital, and shipping networks somewhat prolonged Britain’s foothold in South America (particularly in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile), but by the 1920s, the British yielded to US influence there as well.<sup>8</sup> And in Chile, US Guggenheim Brothers firms assumed majority foreign control over the nitrate industry from British interests by the mid-1920s. This transition between imperial world orders is a familiar story.

But I posit that it was not preordained that it would be the US who would inherit international hegemony from the British empire in the twentieth century. Indeed, the case study of Chilean-Japanese relations illuminates that, at least for a few decades in the early twentieth-century when Anglo-American domain over global affairs seemed to be endangered, many across the post-colonial world believed, and/or hoped, that Japan might fill the role of international leadership relinquished by the British and aspired to by the US. Japan’s successful surge onto the international stage by the 1890s and after, and its accelerating military and imperial might, emerged as a prototypical challenge to the North Atlantic and a powerful inspiration for other “have not” nations on the geopolitical periphery.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, Chilean

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<sup>6</sup> See Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Thomas O’Brien, *The Nitrate Industry and Chile’s Crucial Transition, 1870-1891* (New York: New York University Press, 1982).

<sup>7</sup> Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and its Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006). Julian Go, *Patterns of Empire: The British and American Empires, 1688 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, And Transformation of The American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). A.G. Hopkins, *American Empire: A Global History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018). Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *Empire in Retreat: The Past, Present, and Future of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Victor Bulmer-Thomas, ed., *Britain and Latin America: A Changing Relationship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> Koichi Hagimoto, ed., *Trans-Pacific Encounters: Asia and the Hispanic World* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016). David Malitz, *Japanese-Siamese Relations from the Meiji Restoration to the End of World War II: Relations and Representations* (Bochum: Projektverlag, 2016). Sheldon Garon, “Transnational History and

Pacific visionaries deemed relations with Japan to be profitable, palatable, strategic, and offering a way out their subservience to the North Atlantic. And it was not obvious to many Chileans, even into the early 1940s, that it would be the US, rather than Japan, who would prevail in the Second World War and achieve uncontested power in the Pacific and Latin America. This dissertation thus offers one example of a subordinate society attempting to undue its subordination on the international stage right when counterfactual possibilities for international leadership seemed truly attainable.

Here I reinforce historian Margarita Fajardo's suggestion that historians invert the North-to-South directionality of their analyses of order and international political economy in Latin America.<sup>10</sup> Doing so suggests that the ideologies and forces that shaped Latin American development originated not only in the US but among Latin American diplomats, intellectuals, and policy-makers. So even though Latin America never escaped dependency and the vicious circle of relying upon Anglo-American investments in order to eradicate the need for foreign investment, there were alternative possibilities for the power dynamics of inter-American political economic relations. By looking away from the North and within the South, we see that US dominance was not a given. I insert Chile's Pacific vision into this story and I propose that a directional gaze across the Pacific similarly demonstrates how Chileans envisioned and pursued, but never truly pulled off, a pivot for their development and political economy away from the North Atlantic and towards Japan.

This dissertation also engages with emerging scholarship on ocean and Pacific history that centers maritime connections, life, and epistemologies.<sup>11</sup> The foundational works on Pacific

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Japan's 'Comparative Advantage,'" *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 65-92. Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth-Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2022). David Malitz, "'What Is Good about the Japanese System of Governance?': The Reception of Imperial Japanese Parliamentarism in Siamese/Thai Political Thought (1880s-1940s)," *The International History Review* 45 no. 1 (2023): 48-62. Pedro Iacobelli, *De cara a Asia: pautas en la relación chilena con Japón y China, 1880-1940* (Santiago: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2023). Rafal Pankowski, "Some Remarks About the Idea of 'A Second Japan' in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Polish Political Thought," *International History Review* 45 no. 2 (2023): 307-317. Piotr Perkowski, "Modernization Through Japanization? The Japanese System and State Socialist Poland's Economic Reform," *International History Review* forthcoming (2024).

<sup>10</sup> Margarita Fajardo, *The World that Latin America Created*.

<sup>11</sup> The classic work of oceanic/maritime history is, of course, Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Volume I*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949, 1996). See also Kirti N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951, 1991). Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000). John Gillis, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Jerry Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, Kären Wigen, eds., *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007). Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009). David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram, eds., *Oceanic Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Jeffrey Bolster, *The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013). John Gascoigne, *Encountering the Pacific in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). Daniel Margolies, "Introduction: Oceans Forum," *Diplomatic History* 44 no.3 (2020): 409-412. Helen Rozwadowski, *Vast Expanses: A History of the Oceans* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). Renisa Mowani, *Across Oceans of Law: The Komagata Maru and Jurisdiction in the Time of Empire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

history assess principally indigenous perspectives towards living on the ocean. In his study of the violent European invasions of the Marquesas Islands, for example, Greg Dening conceptualizes indigenous island life in the Pacific through beaches as the physical and metaphorical points of cultural contact, arrival, and departure between native and European societies.<sup>12</sup> Fijian anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa likewise conceptualizes the Pacific as a universe of indigenous islands united by proximity to the sea and the shared experiences of trade, maritime voyaging, and imperial invasions.<sup>13</sup> More recently, most scholarship on the Pacific employs historian Matt Matsuda's characterization of the Pacific World as a "trans-local" and episodic "set of characters and experiences that, taken together, define the Pacific."<sup>14</sup>

Within Latin American history, the emerging literature on the Pacific undoubtedly stems from the larger body of Atlantic World scholarship.<sup>15</sup> Atlantic-based studies offer fresh insights on the extensions and retractions of European empires and the trans-Atlantic slave trade which, over the course of several centuries, forced approximately 12 million Africans into bondage across the Americas. This scholarship reveals that the course of Atlantic, and therefore Latin American and Caribbean, history was determined not only in imperial metropolises and urban colonial centers, but also by the movement of actors who impacted outcomes in insurrectionary and maritime spaces. Atlantic history thus encourages an acknowledgment of the historical agency and contribution of marginalized groups to global processes which historians traditionally narrated through European actors and empires.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourses on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774-1880* (Honolulu: University Hawai'i Press, 1980).

<sup>13</sup> Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, ed. Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu, Epeli Hau'ofa (Fiji: The University of the South Pacific School of Social and Economic Development, 1993), pg. 2-17.

<sup>14</sup> Matt Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2.

<sup>15</sup> For scholarship on Latin America and the Pacific, see: Gregory Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Rainer Buschmann, Rainer, Edward Slack Jr., and James B. Tueller, *Navigating the Spanish Lake: The Pacific in the Iberian World, 1521-1898* (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2014). Edward Melillo, *Strangers on Familiar Soil: Rediscovering the Chile-California Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015). Eva Maria Mehl, *Forced Migration in the Spanish Pacific World: From Mexico to the Philippines, 1765-1811* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). Fredy González, *Paisanos Chinos: Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). Heidi Tinsman, "Rebel Coolies, Citizen Warriors, and Sworn Brothers: The Chinese Loyalty Oath and Alliance with Chile in the War of the Pacific," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 98:3 (2018): 439-470. Kristin Wintersteen, *The Fishmeal Revolution: The Industrialization of the Humboldt Current* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021). Joshua Savala, *Beyond Patriotic Phobias: Connections, Cooperation, and Solidarity in the Peruvian-Chilean Pacific World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022). Kristie Flannery, *Piracy and the Making of the Spanish Pacific World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> For a broad historiographical discussion on the Atlantic World, see Barnard Bailyn, "The Idea of Atlantic History," *Itinerario* 20 no.1 (1996): 19-44. Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *The American Historical Review* 111 no.3 (2006): 741-757. John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000). Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017). Julius Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of Revolution* (New York: Verso Press, 2018). Stefanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). Kevin Dawson, *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora*

My work on Chile and the Pacific extends this Atlantic concern for inverting power inequalities embedded in historical narratives and in centering previously obscured actors and processes, but I depart from the majority of works by developing a Pacific framework that originates with the actors themselves. Indeed, for both the Atlantic and the Pacific fields, the notion of an oceanic “world” primarily operates as an analytical framework developed and applied by the scholar. Rather, my notion of the Pacific vision is informed by the Chilean actors who routinely and self-consciously described theirs as a “Pacific” nation whose geographic distance from Anglo-American circuits of commerce and power distinguished their historical trajectory and contemporary dilemmas from countries oriented to the Atlantic. And they imagined, or falsely detected, a natural affinity to other Pacific nations such as Japan. I thus build upon the literature on Pacific and Atlantic history more broadly, and on the emerging scholarship on Latin America and the Pacific specifically, by asserting that the Pacific mattered and existed in the minds of historical actors and helped determine how Latin Americans positioned themselves in their enclaves, regions, and worlds.

### Sources and Methods

One of this dissertation’s principal interventions is methodological: I am one of the very first scholars to unite Chilean, Japanese, and US archives.<sup>17</sup> (I do not read or speak Japanese but, as I elaborate below, I collected a diversity of documents in Spanish and English in Japan). The diversity of commercial, corporate, diplomatic, intellectual, and personal sources enables me write on Latin American foreign relations and engagements with and contributions to international history, while also accounting for local and national processes that informed and profoundly shaped the course of events internationally. In other words, this dissertation fits into a coalescing field of “Latin America in the world” which sheds the crusty, top-down approaches of traditional diplomatic history by tying together the local, social, and national scales, but also

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(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). Elena Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War, Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> The scattered and disjointed literature on Chilean connections with Asia predominantly focuses on the cultural encounter between Chile and Japan, and theoretical analyses of how actors conceived of a “them” and an “us.” See Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón, 1897-1911: inicios de la expansión diplomática y salitrera en el Asia* (Valparaíso: Universidad de la Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educación, Centro de Estudios de la Cuenca del Pacífico, 1999). César David Ross Orellana, “Auge y Caída de Japón en Chile, 1897– 1943,” *Estudios Políticos* (Instituto de Estudios Políticos, Universidad de Antioquia) 43 (2013): 156–179. César David Ross Orellana, “Chile y Japón: el impacto del quiebre de la democracia, 1973,” *Atenea* 492 no. 2 (2005): 121-134. Roberto Deandracá Barbás, “Relaciones entre Chile y Japón: un siglo de acercamiento,” *Revista del Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile* 154 (2006): 147-167. Pedro Iacobelli, “Japan’s Intelligence Networks in Chile During the Second World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 56 no. 1 (2020): 77-95. Pedro Iacobelli and María Montt Strabucchi, “Encuentros con Asia: Una reflexión en torno a la historiografía latinoamericana desde la cuenca del océano pacífico,” *Historia* 396 (Instituto de Historia PUCV Chile) 10 no. 2 (2020): 179-204). José Antonio González Pizarro, Claudio Llanos Reyes, Baldomero Estrada Turra, Marcelo Lufin Vara, “Diplomacia y migración Japonesa en Chile: Del Proyecto salitrero a la tentativa colonización en el sur 1913-1930,” *Diálogo Andino* 65 (June 2021): 291-306. Ariel Andrés Ruiz Núñez, Roy Del Sol González González, Nicolás Matías Luengo Espinoza y Fabián Antonio Navarro Bahamondes, “Relaciones Diplomáticas y Comerciales Entre Chile y Japón Durante el Periodo de 1910-1943,” (MA Thesis, Universidad del Bío Bío, 2022), Pedro Iacobelli, “Ambivalences orientalistes: économie chilienne et marchés asiatiques, 1900-1940” *Cahiers des Amériques latines* 100-101 (2022): 223-242. Mauricio Paredes Venegas, *La olvidada guerra contra Japón. Secretos diplomáticos y víctimas invisibles durante la segunda Guerra mundial en Chile*, (Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2022). César Ross, *Chile and Asia: Essays on the History of International Affairs* (Ariadna Ediciones, 2022). Pedro Iacobelli, *De cara a Asia: pautas en la relación chilena con Japón y China, 1880-1940* (Santiago: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2023).

brings an international perspective to bear on Latin American historiography which traditionally is overwhelmingly national.<sup>18</sup>

This methodological approach crystallized as I conducted extensive archival research for this dissertation in Chile, Japan, and the United States between 2017 and 2023. In Chile, I primarily rely on two types of sources. First, I worked with the corporate records of the nitrate industry in the recently re-catalogued and massive “Nitrate Collection” housed in the Archivo Nacional Histórico in Santiago. Organized chronologically along the lifecycles of Chile’s various nitrate conglomerates, these sources provide previously unknown logistical details of Chilean-Japanese nitrate commerce and the business logics and institutional dynamics underlying Chilean-Japanese relations. Because the nitrate producing firms that were affiliated under the parastatal conglomerates (rather than the Chilean state) handled their own labor, these documents also provide important insights in the social relations of the nitrate region and the question of Japanese labor immigration. Second, I extensively reviewed the Chilean-Japanese diplomatic record which is split between the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Archivo Nacional de la Administración in Santiago. These documents contain the diverse correspondence, publications, interviews, and reports from Chilean Pacific visionaries stationed in Japan, and it is from these sources that I assembled the notion of the Pacific vision and its anti-Anglo-American imperialism elements.

In Japan, I collected diplomatic documents in Spanish and English at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, an assortment of very useful Chilean nitrate marketing materials at the National Diet Library in Tokyo that I had not seen in Chile, and some very useful published and unpublished secondary sources on Japanese immigration at the archive of the Japan International Cooperation Agency in Yokohama. Because I do not speak Japanese, I worked with a Japanese historian to translate and facilitate my introductions at each archival site before collecting a large number of documents in Spanish and English. But I also photographed many written in Japanese that I hope to have translated in the future.

In the US, I worked with State Department and diplomatic records on US-Japanese and US-Chilean relations that I principally use in Chapter Five when I insert the Pacific vision into the larger international history of the 1930s and 1940s.

### **Chapter Outline**

This dissertation contains five core chapters. Chapter One narrates the formation of Chilean-Japanese relations from the 1880s and onwards and the construction of the Pacific vision. In the late nineteenth century, many Chilean diplomat-businessmen stationed in Asia pursued Japan as a new principal market for nitrate primed for massive fertilizer consumption due to the Meiji state’s intertwined challenges of depleted soils, food shortages, and a rising population. Mutual interest in nitrate commerce motivated the inauguration of official relations in 1897 and the founding of the first-ever direct shipping routes (by Japanese state-subsidized steamship companies) linking Japan and South America in the early 1900s. This chapter examines the logistical and diplomatic choreography of a Chilean-Japanese nitrate commodity

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<sup>18</sup> A few leading examples of this “Latin America in the world” field include Tanya Harmer, *Allende’s Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). Juan Pablo Scarfi, *The Hidden History of International Law in the Americas: Empire and Legal Networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Eric Zolov, *The Last Good Neighbor: Mexico in the Global Sixties*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020). Rebecca Herman, *Cooperating with the Colossus: A Social and Political History of US Military Bases in World War II Latin America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). Rachel Nolan, *Until I find You: Disappeared Children and Coercive Adoptions in Guatemala* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2024).

chain and the idea of Latin American-Japanese relations until the global economic collapse in September of 1929 forced a redesign of the institutions and shipping networks that conducted this commerce.

Chapter Two examines the anti-Anglo-American and nation-building element of the Pacific vision. I track how some Chileans came to see the seemingly dizzying success of Japanese development from the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and onwards as the key to the riddle of post-colonial nation-building in a North Atlantic-dominated world. In their extensive correspondence, speeches, reports, and published works, the most vocal Pacific visionaries made the case that extending economic ties with Japan could enable Chile to assimilate Japan's mechanisms for development and protecting its economic sovereignty. These nationalist actors identified Japanese commitments to the national collective, domestic industrialization, and defiance of the North Atlantic imperial world order as applicable remedies for Chile's own economic breakdown, fractious politics, restricted sovereignty, and lingering dependence on foreign capital. However, Chilean advocates of this Pacific pivot clashed with the foreign investors that dominated the nitrate industry and its Chilean oligarchic collaborators who were unwilling to antagonize foreign capital by steering the industry away from its North Atlantic infrastructure.

While many Chileans celebrated Japan as a desirable partner in the pursuit of economic sovereignty and sustainable commerce, others voiced their anxieties about increasing ties with Asians, particularly regarding the prospect of inviting Japanese laborers to resolve the nitrate industry's diminishing labor supply. Chapter Three thus asks why Chile, despite experiencing similar labor shortages caused by similar forces as its Latin American neighbors, several of whom contracted for thousands of Japanese workers, never received large-scale Japanese labor immigration. I argue that internal contradictions over defining the terms of Chilean nationhood precluded the arrival of Japanese laborers that some Chileans sincerely believed could have reversed the nitrate fertilizer industry's—and, by implication, Chile's—financial misfortunes. The debate over Japanese labor evolved into an urgent national conversation through which Chileans contested definitions of their national community and its future.

Chapter Four analyzes the experiences of the limited numbers of Japanese who *did* arrive in Chile. This chapter pivots from national-level discourses to the local histories of Chile's northern nitrate port cities where most Japanese initially arrived. I analyze how Japanese travelers and Chilean authorities clashed, often violently, over divergent and mutually unintelligible forms of racial exceptionalism. Chileans, convinced of their regional whiter superiority, collided with a Japanese notion of Asian racial exceptionalism promoted by the Meiji state with which Japanese officials rationalized their surge onto the international stage and justified their imperialism in East Asia. Japanese actors moved about in Chile under the impression that their formidable empire lent them an elevated social and racial status. Outrage and bewilderment ensued when they encountered in Chile xenophobic assumptions that whiter, western Chileans outranked Japanese in civilization and racial hierarchy. Taken together, my two chapters on Japanese immigration illustrate the complexity of Chile's Pacific vision and how local, social questions percolated up to the highest levels of commerce and diplomacy.

Chapter Five examines when and how the project to solidify Japan as a vast market for nitrate briefly achieved quantitative and infrastructural peaks in the 1930s and early 1940s, before the international momentum culminating with the Second World War shattered the Pacific vision. Unlike the rest of Latin America which disaffiliated from Japan and reassured the US of its geopolitical allegiances, Chile retained commercial and diplomatic ties with Japan until 1943

specifically because, I posit, of Chileans' sustained hunger for Japanese commerce. Chilean Pacific visionaries forged ahead with nitrate commerce in Japan even while fully cognizant of the violence and nature of Japanese empire. Indeed, Chileans hoped that Japanese occupied territories (such as Manchukuo) could become significant markets for nitrate fertilizer, and they also attempted to sell nitrate to the Japanese military to produce munitions for combat. The economic practicality of selling to and aligning with Japan thus outweighed the western world's dread over Japanese imperialism, sympathy for those enduring the brunt of Japanese violence, or any geopolitical or ideological loyalties to US interests. Simultaneously, Japan invested in links with Chile and Latin America to replace lost commerce with the Allied powers and to legitimize its international standing which had come under heavy scrutiny after its army accelerated its invasion of China in 1937. But by 1943, the likelihood of a US military triumph, and the fact that the US remained a larger trading partner for Chile than did Japan, compelled the Chilean senate to terminate relations with Japan. Under its subsequent occupation of Japan (1945-1952), the US government dissolved the Japanese commercial conglomerates that had previously conducted commerce with Chile and deliberately blocked the resumption of Chilean nitrate commerce in favor of synthetic fertilizer imported from the US. Thereafter, in possession of uncontested Pacific hegemony, the US would only tolerate commercial visions for the region that served US interests, thus shutting the narrow window for the possibility of the Pacific vision that Chilean and Japanese actors had carefully constructed since the 1890s.

## Chapter 1

### Early Chilean-Japanese Relations and Building the Pacific Vision, 1890s-1929

In early November of 1912, nearly a thousand Japanese businessmen, diplomats, intellectuals, journalists, agriculturalists, and others crowded into a large auditorium in Nagano, Japan. They had arrived to attend a public conference promoting the promise of Chilean nitrate fertilizer for Japanese agriculture. Already a principal consumer of Chilean nitrate, Nagano's government and chamber of commerce invited Chile's diplomatic representation in Tokyo for a very well-accounted visit, hoping to increase their acquisition of the Chilean fertilizer. Splashy festivities initiated the public conference, beginning when a Japanese orchestra performed the Chilean national anthem during which the crowded audience stood. Afterwards, a number of city officials and other Chilean and Japanese businessmen, through a translator provided by the Japanese Foreign Language School, detailed before the conference hall their shared visions for mutually profitable relations.

At his turn to speak, the Chilean Minister to Japan, Alfredo Irarrázaval, began by likening the Chilean and Japanese social and environmental landscapes. The rail journey to Nagano, he commented, inspired "the most intense emotions that a Chilean soul could feel" because "your mountains, your rivers, your trees, and your hospitality closely resemble, and in fact are almost identical...to the fatherland that I represent."<sup>19</sup> Irarrázaval described nitrate as the "mysterious elixir" that could for Japan "return to fatigued soils the vigor they need...like granting to an old and tired man the bold illusions of youth." Invoking the two nations' mirrored coastlines, Irarrázaval added that "the concert of nature" had preordained for Japanese plants to seek out Chilean nitrate which in turn, yearned for Japanese soils from across "the opposite banks of the Pacific." Irarrázaval concluded: "Your industries have some of Chile in them, your flowers have the faint scent of my country's flowers."<sup>20</sup>

This public conference in Nagano in 1912 neatly introduces this chapter's focus: how a variety of actors in Chile and Japan, from the 1880s and onwards, envisaged the promise of their compatibilities in commerce, agriculture, and Pacific geography. As discussed extensively in Chapter 2, once Chile's nitrate industry faced an existential crisis in the 1910s, many Chilean diplomat-businessmen stationed in Japan argued that Japanese consumption alone could completely revitalize the industry. Simultaneously, they suggested, Chilean nitrate could resolve some of Japan's most pressing concerns such as agricultural shortages and depleted soils. This chapter traces the evolution of Chilean-Japanese relations from their establishment based on expectations for nitrate commerce in the nineteenth century, through the global economic collapse of 1929.

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<sup>19</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, anexos, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, Archivo Nacional de la Administración (hereafter ARNAD). The document is entitled: "Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Ministro de Chile en el Japón, Don Alfredo Irarrázaval, en la Gran Asamblea de Industriales y Comerciantes verificada en Nagano el día 2 de noviembre de 1912," 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-7.

I argue that Chilean diplomat-businessmen (as I call them), other nitrate businessmen, and a host of Japanese actors and financial intermediaries mutually developed through this work a Pacific vision. That is, the idea that Chile and Japan shared unique compatibilities, and potentially a mutual interdependence, between Chile and Japan in geography, commerce, economic development, and anti-imperialism that could be harmonized to create and to resolve some of the most pressing national concerns in both states. Actors at once pointed to their shared coastlines as the most promising feature of Chilean-Japanese relations, while simultaneously admitting that shipping goods reliably and economically across the 9,280 nautical miles separating Valparaíso and Yokohama posed the largest logistical challenge of all.<sup>21</sup> Chileans in Japan earnestly worked, under often quite difficult conditions, to assemble and choreograph the commercial infrastructure for the sale of Chilean nitrate fertilizer in Asia. I thus argue that the Pacific vision represented a new logic through which some Chileans hoped to design their international political economy.

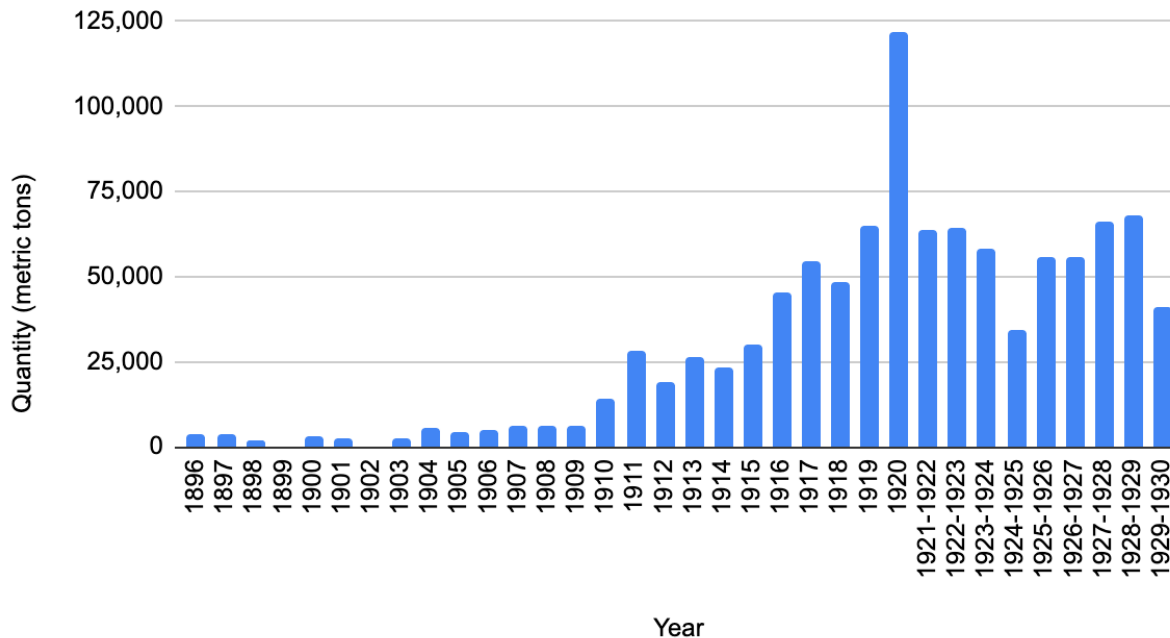
The Pacific vision offers a useful framework by accounting both for what occurred and for what actors pursued but remained beyond their grasp. Chileans working in underfunded and undeveloped Chilean diplomatic and commercial offices across Asia imagined the bursting potential of Asia's markets as the *savoir* for their weakened national nitrate industry. Though exporting nitrate was state policy, Chileans abroad clashed with Chileans in Chile over the latter's ambivalent response towards the promise of these vast new markets. So while nitrate exports to Japan showed promise by the 1910s and 1920s, many Chileans in Japan interpreted the insufficient funding and often ambivalent support from Santiago as the embodiment of what *could* have been accomplished for Chilean nitrate. And while the numbers never reached the scale predicted, this chapter tells the story of the actors who sincerely believed that massive Japanese nitrate consumption, and subsequently a brighter moment for Chile's economy, were always just around the corner if only their states invested in and authorized a commercial infrastructure that would enable this logistically tricky commerce to flourish.

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<sup>21</sup> Francisco Ghisolfo Araya, "Vinculaciones navales entre Chile y Japón," *Revista de Marina* (Enero-Febrero 1983): 373-378. Accessed at Biblioteca Histórica de la Armada, Valparaíso, Chile.

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## Chilean Nitrate Imported into Japan, 1896-1929



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### Early Relations

In 1897, Chile and Japan signed a treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, initializing formal diplomatic relations.<sup>23</sup> Japan already established relations via formal treaties with Peru (1873), Mexico (1888), and Brazil (1895) as it looked towards South America as an outlet for emigration, markets for its manufactures, and for the supply of raw materials. Struggling to feed a booming population from exhausted, nitrogen-depleted soils, the Japanese state sought the importation of Chilean fertilizer, and emerging Japanese shippers and firms likewise acknowledged the potential profit of this industry.

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<sup>22</sup> These figures are compiled from many sources in Chile in the Archivo Nacional Histórico, Archivo Nacional de la Administración, and Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile. Sometimes, figures are given for the calendar year and at others across two calendar years (as in, for example, 1920-1921) because different countries operated along their own “fertilizer year” (*año salitrero*) organized around planting and cultivation. For example, Chile’s fertilizer year spanned July 1-June 30 while Japan’s fertilizer year ran from August 1-July 31. I have been able to corroborate some of these figures with multiple sources, but in general I would consider these figures to be very accurate estimations because even in cases where I have competing figures for one year, the difference is often relatively minimal. I am currently organizing a broader quantitative appendix for these figures.

<sup>23</sup> The states formalized these mutual interests through a commercial treaty signed in 1897 in Washington DC through US officials as intermediaries. The Chilean senate did not officially ratify the treaty until 1906, yet the document enabled both states to appoint diplomatic representation in the other.

So Japan—with its crises of agricultural poverty and excess population—and Chile—with its massive but wobbling industry desperate for fresh markets—found in each other seemingly tailored mutual interests. Actors proposed that nitrate could revitalize Japanese agro-economics (particularly in the heavily agricultural prefectures of Tokushima, Nagano, and Yamagata) and abundantly produce staple crops such as sugar, winter cereals (such as barley and wheat), vegetables, fruits, and rice.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, studies revealed that nitrate particularly nourished mulberry trees whose leaves provided the food source for silkworms.<sup>25</sup> Chilean Minister to Japan, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, calculated in 1920 a 63.2% rise in silk yields between 1910 and 1919 stemming directly from the methodical and “scientific” application of fertilizers (especially Chilean nitrate) in mulberry tree cultivation.<sup>26</sup> Nitrate, therefore, could also stimulate domestic consumption and exports for Japan’s critical silk industry.<sup>27</sup>

In the years following the formalization of diplomatic relations, Chilean-Japanese commerce began in relatively small and imbalanced quantities. From 1907-1910, for example, Japan imported from Chile approximately 3 million Yen in primarily nitrate and wool; and Japan exported to Chile approximately 354,000 Yen in mostly silk goods, some food products, and some porcelain.<sup>28</sup> The Chilean state-run railroad company also acquired motors from Japan, even though they were actually initially manufactured in the US.<sup>29</sup> Comparatively, in 1907 alone Chile imported from England approximately 67.5 million Yen and exported to that country around 70.7 million Yen.<sup>30</sup> Japan’s trade deficit with Chile mirrored its uneven commercial relationship

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<sup>24</sup> In Japan, Chilean nitrate was marketed as either: *Chili Shoseki* (Chilean Nitrate of Soda), *Ten-nen-San Chili Shoseki* (Natural Nitrate of Soda), or *Kami-Sama no Tsukutta Chili Shoseki* (Chilean Nitrate Created by God). Y. Yamakita, Chilean Nitrate Agricultural Service Bureau, “Memorandum,” July 2, 1940, Fondo Salitre, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 585, Archivo Nacional Histórico (hereafter ANH)

<sup>25</sup> One report from the 1930s divided Japanese agriculture between lowland crops (primarily paddy rice) which performed best with sulfate fertilization and highland crops which included mulberry trees, tea, vegetables, and fruits for which nitrate enjoyed a reputation for superiority. Research generally indicated that in paddy rice cultivation, Chilean nitrate’s nitrogen content escaped through watering before being absorbed by the plant. L. W. Richardson to Francisco Mardones, Oficio No. 41, February 17, 1937, Fondo Salitre, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 182, ANH, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón (apuntes para la monografía de un gran pueblo): Las fuerzas internas del Imperio* (Tokio: Katsuo Takahashi, 1921), 106.

<sup>27</sup> In 1917, Chilean Minister to Japan, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, reported that 300 thousand families worked the 450 thousand hectares of mulberry crops (not including another 70 thousand in Manchuria and Korea) which helped produce the silk which comprised approximately 30% Japan’s exports and about 25% of the world’s supply of silk. Mulberry cultivation was, therefore, a massive industry. Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, “Memorandum,” October 22, 1917, Fondo Histórico, Volume 760. Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile (hereafter RREE archive). 23.

<sup>28</sup> Another point of contention in the treaty emerged over Chile’s opposition to Japan’s desire to include the most-favored-nation status. Chile hesitated because they hoped to retain certain preferential trade agreements only with other Latin American states and did not want these to automatically apply to Japan. The Chileans also did not want Japan to be able to offer commercial partnerships to other Latin American nations that were more advantageous than Chile’s. Alfredo Irrazábal to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 30, May 1, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>29</sup> Roberto de Andraca Barbás, “Relaciones entre Chile y Japón: un siglo de acercamiento,” *Revista de Estudios Internacionales* 39 no.154 (2006): 161.

<sup>30</sup> Article translations included in: Anselmo Hevia Riquelme to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 39, July 24, 1910, Fondo RREE, Volume 1525, ARNAD, 1-5.

with other countries in the Americas and Europe, but the trend began to reverse as Japan's manufacturing boomed following victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Chilean led South America's exports to Japan until the 1930s when Argentine wool overtook Chilean nitrate as the leading South American product.<sup>32</sup>

Globally, consumers utilized Chilean nitrate primarily as an agricultural fertilizer. But nitrate also served as an ingredient for producing mixed fertilizers, the nitrogen source within the production of other chemicals, or for industrial feedstock in the manufacture of goods such as steel, glass, and paint. Due to its high combustibility, nitrate could also be combined with other chemicals to produce gunpowder and explosives. Between the 1890s and 1940s, Chilean nitrate appeared in each of these industries in Japan (and consumption often spiked during times of war when the state purchased nitrate for munitions production), but it was primarily as a fertilizer that Chileans in Japan marketed the product.<sup>33</sup> Across the following decades whenever Japanese firms hesitated to import nitrate because of its reputation as war materiel, Chileans responded that even though the chemical agents used to produce gunpowder and explosives could be derived and concentrated from Chilean nitrate, raw nitrate itself remained merely an innocuous fertilizer.<sup>34</sup>

Opening nitrate markets in Japan required a unified effort among Chilean diplomats, the state, and the primarily foreign-owned nitrate producers' conglomerates. One of the initial conglomerates—The Nitrate Propaganda Association (1894-1913)—operated several branches across the world and in 1907 founded an office in Tokyo called the Nitrate Delegation of Japan (*La Delegación Salitrera de Japón*) led by British agronomists and businessmen.<sup>35</sup> While the record illustrates that, for the most part, members of the Nitrate Delegation earnestly aligned and collaborated with Chileans seeking to open Japan to nitrate, Chilean diplomats frequently straddled positions in which their public and private obligations overlapped as they were tasked with representing both the state and sometimes the Nitrate Propaganda Association.<sup>36</sup> Foreign, particularly British, influence in South America extended so far that Chile and its neighbors

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<sup>31</sup> Alfredo Viel Cabero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, September 27, 1907. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>32</sup> Jaime Lagos, *Chile and Japan: 100 Years of History* (1997). Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan, 45.

<sup>33</sup> Alfredo Irrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 234, June 25, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>34</sup> Alfredo Irrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 234, June 25, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>35</sup> Délégation Française des Producteurs de Nitrate se Soudé du Chili, *Cent Années D'Exportation du Nitrate de Soudé du Chili, 1830-1930* (Paris: Draeger Imprimer, 1930). Volume 49, Fonde Salitre, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, ANH.

<sup>36</sup> Scottish agronomist, John Struthers, worked as the main representative to the Propaganda Association's London committee, and Richard J. Kirby, executive of the shipping company Sale and Frazer, was appointed as Chilean Consul in Yokohama. Between 1907 and 1932 (when financing propaganda efforts in Japan's market transferred from London's nitrate offices to New York under the COSACH, London institutions paid a total of £190,000. L.W. Richardson to Francisco Mardones, Oficio No. 41, February 17, 1937, Fondo Salitre, Fondo COVENSA Volume 182, ANH.

often appointed foreign businessmen as their consular representatives in other countries. This occasionally occurred with Chilean consular appointments in Japan.<sup>37</sup>

Chile initially organized its diplomatic representation in Asia (including consuls located in Kobe, Hong Kong, and Manila) under the jurisdiction of the consulate in the important Japanese port city of Yokohama, where Chileans had been working even without the support of a formal treaty since 1891.<sup>38</sup> Chileans stationed in Yokohama undertook the herculean task of not only managing and evaluating Chilean representatives stationed elsewhere in East Asia with whom communication remained slow and difficult, but also the painstaking demands of simply compiling an understanding of Japan's commercial and political history, extending contacts with Japanese firms and banks, and spreading awareness of Chilean nitrate which, to that point, possessed little to no reputation among Japanese farmers. Chile's diplomatic offices eventually employed numerous Japanese translators and interpreters provided by either the Japanese firms with whom they worked or the Japanese Foreign Language School in Tokyo.

Though initially lacking a maritime commercial infrastructure, both nations possessed navies that traversed the Pacific and which produced points of contact since the 1860s. For example, Japanese naval commander Ito Shikeyuki landed an instructional vessel named the *Ryujo* in Valparaíso in 1883.<sup>39</sup> Thereafter, the countries exchanged commercial and training expeditions; most notably in 1888 when the Chilean navy dispatched a small corvette named the *Abtao* to visit Hong Kong, Yokohama, and San Francisco. The *Abtao* departed Iquique on February 9 and, following a short stay in Hong Kong and sailing around the Chinese coast, anchored in Yokohama by June 6 as the first Chilean naval vessel to ever arrive in Japan. While the ship reprovisioned for the return trip to San Francisco and loaded 110 tons of coal, the crew disembarked and enjoyed ten days of travel through shipyards, monuments, and military sites in Yokohama, Tokyo, and Yedo guided by Spanish diplomats. The Chilean ship the *Baquedano* completed a collective six visits to Japan between 1899 and 1932 for instructional purposes and to ship Japanese coal.<sup>40</sup>

In 1904, Chile sold to Japan a modern battlecruiser to fight in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905).<sup>41</sup> Japan's navy named the ship the *Itzumi* (the Chileans had named it the *Esmeralda* after originally purchasing it from Britain in 1889). The *Itzumi* evidently earned significant acclaim as the first Japanese vessel to engage Russian ships during, and played a critical role in

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<sup>37</sup> Alfredo Viel Cabero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, September 27, 1907. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>38</sup> Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japonés, 1897-1911: inicios de la expansión diplomática y salitrera en el Asia* (Valparaíso: Universidad de la Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educación, Centro de Estudios de la Cuenca del Pacífico, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Ariel Takeda, Naomi Hirose, Maria Teresa de Senda, "Los Inmigrantes Japoneses y los Nikkei Chilenos: Perspectiva General Histórica," Sociedad Japonesa de Bienficiencia, Proyecto Internacional Investigación Nikkei, Comisión PIIN-Chile, 2000. Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Chile also sold the ship to satisfy its end of a mutual commitment with Argentina to reduce South American naval capacities. In order to sell the ship while remaining officially neutral in Japan's war, Chile sold the ship under an Ecuadorian flag for £220,000 through American banks and finalized the transition via Chile's legation in France. Exposure of the affair evidently aroused significant domestic backlash towards the Ecuadorian and Chilean governments. Chilean diplomats were forced to perform rhetorical acrobatics to diffuse Russian hostility towards Chile and Ecuador. Francisco Ghisolfo Araya, "Vinculaciones navales entre Chile y Japón," *Revista de Marina* (Enero-Febrero 1983): 373-378. Accessed at Biblioteca Histórica de la Armada, Valparaíso, Chile.

securing Japan's victory in, the decisive the battle of Tsushima in May of 1905. Naval officials for decades thereafter pointed to the acquisition of the *Itzumi* as a pivotal moment of Chilean-Japanese affinity and naval collaboration. Japanese naval ships reciprocated with goodwill visits to Chilean ports beginning in the late nineteenth-century.<sup>42</sup>

During the First World War, Chile purchased Japanese arms to meet what Chilean Minister to Japan, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, deemed Chile's "imminent needs of national defense." In effort to "open for our country the arsenal of the [Japanese] empire," in 1918, Chile's Ministry of War purchased from Japan a package that included hundreds of Hotchkiss machine guns, millions cartridges, and related equipment.<sup>43</sup>

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From the moment of their arrival in Japan, Chilean representatives almost invariably pointed to the grand potential of Japan's untapped fertilizer markets. Alfredo Corq Port, Chile's first ever Consul in Yokohama, exhorted Chilean officials and the public to turn their eyes towards Japan, asserting in the Chilean biweekly newspaper, *La Libertad Electoral*, in 1889 that nitrate's "preferred markets should be Asian markets."<sup>44</sup> Following the establishment of formal relations and negotiations over a commercial treaty in the late 1890s, Chile's former Foreign Minister and first ever Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary to Japan, Carlos Morla Vicuña, enthusiastically asserted that because of "the studies I have conducted, Japan can and should become an important market for nitrate of soda, to be used as an agricultural fertilizer and imported directly from Chile."<sup>45</sup> Chilean consul in Yokohama, Alfredo Viel Cavero, echoed this confidence for nitrate in 1907: "The marked development that fertilizers have today opens a large window for Chile...with total certainty, Chile will have a great market in Japan."<sup>46</sup> By 1911, Chilean Minister to Japan, Alfredo Irarrázaval, conveyed his confidence that Japan would emerge as "the largest consumer of fertilizers in the world."<sup>47</sup> Irarrázaval concluded that Japan, and eventually all of Asia, "could come to consume the entirety of our national [nitrate] production."<sup>48</sup> Japan therefore offered "a market many times greater than what we have had before. The compass of our fortune is forcefully pointing Chile towards [the Far East]."<sup>49</sup>

Other diplomatic reports sent back to Santiago often cited or listed bibliographies of recent publications by Japanese agricultural firms, experts, and institutions to corroborate

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<sup>42</sup> Jikyo Ishino, "Visita de la Escudra de Entrenamiento Japonesa," *Revista de Marina* 90 no. 1 (Enero-Febrero 1973): 436-440. Accessed at Biblioteca Histórica de la Armada, Valparaíso, Chile.

<sup>43</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 92D Confidencial, December 31, 1920, "Memoria," Fondo Histórico, Volume 837, RREE Archive, 1-3,

<sup>44</sup> Alfredo Corq Port, "Salitre" (Conclusión) en *La Libertad Electoral*, Año III, No. 919, Santiago, 27 de febrero de 1889, pg 1. Quoted in Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 32, footnote 55.

<sup>45</sup> Carlos Morla Vicuña, *Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Imperio Japon, 1900* (San Francisco, CA: Imprenta de Jos. M. Torres, 1900), Code 904541, Accessed at Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 21.

<sup>46</sup> Alfredo Viel Cavero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, "Memorandum," June 5, 1907. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>47</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Enrique Rodríguez, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, December 14, 1911, Fondo RREE, Volume 1607, ARNAD.

<sup>48</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 220, June 24, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>49</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 30, May 1, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD. 3295.

Chileans' confidence in Japanese fertilizer consumption. Chilean Minister to Japan in 1899, Carlos Morla Vicuña, authored a particularly extensive memorandum on nitrate's prospects there.<sup>50</sup> Entitled, "Study Relating to the Prospects for Nitrate of Soda as an Agricultural Fertilizer in Japan," Morla researched Japan's unorganized fertilizer market currently divided between homemade nitrogenous vegetable fertilizers such as garbanzo bean cake and canola meal, some imported chemical fertilizers, ash, the sporadic use of animal and fish manure and scrap, and some human feces. Japan's estimated domestic fertilizer production of 305,773 metric tons also barely satisfied 30% of the nation's demand. Morla estimated that nearly an additional third of Japan's fertilizer supplies were imported and therefore reasoned that an effective and competitively priced foreign fertilizer could infiltrate and dominate the Japanese market within just a few short years.<sup>51</sup>

Not only were conditions already ripe for massive consumption, but Chilean fertilizer offered a lower price and higher potency of nitrogen. According to Morla, a ton of Chilean nitrate in 1899 contained 150-160 kilograms of nitrogen while few of the nearly four dozen other classes of fertilizer which he identified in Japan even approximated 100 kilograms of nitrogen per ton. Furthermore, Chilean nitrate (at this moment in 1899) costed .49 yen per kilogram while most for other fertilizers ranged in price from .5-.9 yen per kilogram. Morla further described how Chilean nitrate, unlike most other fertilizers, withstood the depletion of its nitrogen content during the process of manufacture or application. Accounting for total domestic demand and crop and farmer behavior, Morla estimated—in his mind, conservatively—that Japan ought to be able to consume 100,000 tons of nitrate annually (a dramatic increase from the three-to-four thousand tons shipped to Japan throughout the late 1890s). Intensive study and equally enthusiastic conversations with the directors of institutions such as the Agricultural Experimental Station in Tokyo and the General of the Bank of Japan only reinforced for Morla that Japanese consumption of nitrate within only a few years "would be unlimited."<sup>52</sup>

The Chilean press even commented on the opportunities presented by involvement in Japan. The evening edition of the Valparaíso daily, *El Mercurio*, commented on June 20, 1905 that "on numerous occasions Japan has signaled its interest as a very possible and viable market for our nitrate...Has the moment not arrived, in this unique and climactic moment in the history of Japan [to further relations]?"<sup>53</sup> Chilean Minister to Japan from 1916-1921, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, disagreed with many contemporaries regarding Japan's agricultural poverty (he published an extensive monograph in 1921 calculating that Japan could comfortably feed

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<sup>50</sup> Morla estimated that, excluding Hokkaido and Formosa, agricultural lands accounted for only 25% of Japan's total surface area, in which the predominant crops included rice, barley, wheat, millet, potatoes, mulberry, canola seed, tea, cotton, tobacco, indigo, and hemp. Carlos Morla Vicuña, *Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Imperio Japon, 1900*.

<sup>51</sup> Carlos Morla Vicuña, *Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Imperio Japon, 1900*. Other fertilizers and use of human feces mentioned in: C. Alvarez de la Rivera to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 73, October 2, 1928, Fondo RREE, Volume 2693, ARNAD.

<sup>52</sup> Carlos Morla Vicuña, *Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Imperio Japon, 1900*.

<sup>53</sup> *La Tarde del Mercurio*, Valparaíso, martes 20 de junio de 1905, Editorial, pg. 3. Appendix, Documento No. 8, in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japon*, pg 322-323.

itself) but only with a deep reliance on massive quantities of imported foreign fertilizers, such as sulfate of ammonia and Chilean nitrate.<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, a chorus of Chilean voices abroad and in the press hoped that predictions of profits accompanied by hard numbers would inculcate state officials in Chile and Japan with the urgency of supporting this massive business.

Moreover, these same Chilean diplomat-businessmen identified Chilean-Japanese links as deriving not only from economic and agricultural compatibilities but from Pacific geography. At his swearing in ceremony as Chilean Minister in Tokyo's Imperial Palace in July of 1898, Morla outlined to the Japanese emperor how "our countries extend from the opposite banks of the same ocean, reciprocally consume each other's products, and are called naturally to maintain direct and continuous commercial relations."<sup>55</sup> In 1907, Chilean Consul in Yokohama, Viel Cavero, wrote to Santiago that "Chile, on the Pacific littoral, has its natural market [in Japan], more so than Europe and even more than North America onto which nature has imposed many inconveniences."<sup>56</sup> Chilean Minister Alfredo Irarrázaval described in 1913 the numerous "surprising similarities that reveal, at the opposite ends of the same transpacific diagonal, a kind of pre-established harmony between Japan and Chile."<sup>57</sup> Indeed, Irarrázaval elaborated elsewhere that acquainting themselves with one another would enable the nations to "overcome nature's work and tighten the relations between countries that otherwise seemed destined to live eternally separate due to the large expanse of the oceans."<sup>58</sup>

Brief biographies of two of the most outspoken Pacific visionaries and key protagonists of this chapter—Carlos Morla Vicuña and Alfredo Irarrázaval Zañartu—shed light on who these "diplomat-businessmen" were and how they came to represent Chile in Japan. Born into an elite Santiago family in 1846, Morla quickly ascended the cultural and political ranks. He followed a traditional elite path in earning a law degree before working as a journalist in Santiago in the 1860s during which time he also composed poetry. He subsequently entered the Chamber of Deputies as a member of the Conservative Party before working in or leading Chile's legations to Brazil, France, England, Uruguay, and Argentina. An ardent nationalist, Morla dedicated himself to studying and defending Chile's disputed sovereignty with Argentina over the Straits of Magellan and Tierra del Fuego. A seasoned diplomat and politician by the 1890s, Morla served as Chile's Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1896-97 before serving briefly as Chile's Minister to Japan in 1899. Though he died shortly thereafter in Buffalo, New York in 1901, he enthusiastically took up the call of the Pacific vision and produced abundant documentation on Japanese agriculture and fertilizer markets from which subsequent Chileans abroad would draw.

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<sup>54</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón (apuntes para la monografía de un gran pueblo): Las fuerzas internas del Imperio* (Tokio: Katsuo Takahashi, 1921).

<sup>55</sup> Carlos Morla Vicuña, *Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Imperio Japon, 1900*.

<sup>56</sup> Alfredo Viel Cavero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, June 5, 1907. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>57</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, January 20, 1913, Collection 463, "Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América," Fondo Histórico, RREE Archive, 58.

<sup>58</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 84, March 12, 1913, Fondo RREE, Volume 1793, ARNAD.

Indeed, historical bibliographer Virgilio Figueroa stated in 1925 that “it was thanks to [Morla] that nitrate became known for the first time among the agriculturalists [of Japan].”<sup>59</sup>

Born in Santiago a generation later in 1867 and educated in British primary schools and later Law at the University of Arrastrado, Alfredo Irrázaval likewise followed Morla’s elite path to diplomat via journalism. Possessing an artistic calling, Irrázaval earned fame for composing patriotic poetry and songs before working as a reporter in various Santiago periodicals. Irrázaval reported from the frontlines of Chile’s brutal civil war in 1890-91 and even attained the rank of Captain while covering the rebelling (and ultimately victorious) naval faction. Following brief military-diplomatic posts in Switzerland and Germany after the civil war, he returned to journalism full-time and even co-founded *La Tarde* in Santiago. *La Tarde*’s political affiliations vaulted Irrázaval to the Chamber of Deputies in 1897 as a member of the Democratic party. The congressman Irrázaval earned acclaim for an unwavering patriotism, eloquent speeches reflecting on Chile’s most pressing national concerns, and an interest in internationalism. This trio of characteristics flowed out of his reports when he subsequently served as Chilean Minister to Japan (1911-1913), Brazil (1913-1920), Germany (1920-1925), Ecuador (starting in 1925), and once more in Brazil. Virgilio Figueroa likewise applauded Irrázaval’s unwavering dedication to nitrate and nation while in Germany, writing that he “was the resuscitator of Chilean nitrate in the fatherland of [German] synthetic nitrate.”<sup>60</sup> So once individuals like Morla and Irrázaval found themselves representing *la patria* in Tokyo, they applied their enthusiastic nationalism and strengths in rhetoric and research to defend their confidence in nitrate’s bright future in Japan.

### **The Pacific Vision in Japan**

A political revolution in 1868 transitioned Japan away from the military government of the Tokugawa Shogunate that had governed the country since 1603 and restored imperial rule. A small cohort of young, bureaucratic reformers acting on behalf of the emperor collaborated with a collection of foreign advisors to carry out what historian’s refer to as the Meiji Restoration. Restoring Japan’s global engagements following centuries of self-imposed isolation, these actors aimed to quickly modernize in the western mold and abandon the nation’s feudal past, while also hoping to preserve Japanese characteristics. The centralizing Meiji state immediately set to eliminate the Tokugawa class structure and assemble a powerful, western-style army that defeated China and Russia and also suppressed sporadic bouts of internal rural opposition. Reforms revolutionized Japanese education, culture, and politics and durably inserted Japan into the nineteenth century’s rapidly globalizing world.

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<sup>59</sup> Virgilio Figueroa, *Diccionario Histórico Biográfico y Bibliográfico de Chile*, Tomo IV y V (Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1925, 1931), 334-335. I also referenced: “Carlos Morla Vicuña, Reseñas biográficas parlamentarias,” *Memoria Chilena*, Accessed July 5, 2022.

[https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas\\_parlamentarias/wiki/Carlos\\_Morla\\_Vicu%C3%B1a](https://www.bcn.cl/historiapolitica/resenas_parlamentarias/wiki/Carlos_Morla_Vicu%C3%B1a)

<sup>60</sup> Virgilio Figueroa, *Diccionario Histórico Biográfico y Bibliográfico de Chile*, Tomo III (Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1929, 1974), 542-545.

But by the 1890s and 1900s, however, the enthusiasm for Meiji modernity began to wane due to overpopulation, unemployment and worker mobilization, food shortages, and anxieties that surrendering all national culture to western customs corroded Japan's unique cultural heritage. Aspirations to establish a new and more representative government formally prevailed by 1912 when the Meiji emperor died, and a fresh generation of liberal politicians took command of a highly restrictive constitutional democracy governed by an emperor and the Diet. The subsequent Taishō period (1912-1926) witnessed the acceleration of quasi-liberal party politics at home and the solidification of Japanese prominence on the world stage, while simultaneously intensifying the same social conflicts around class, labor, and representation that destabilized the late Meiji period. By the 1920s, Japanese leaders participated in global disarmament and resentfully tolerated the West's refusal to recognize Japan as an equal, while expanding the imperial project in East Asia.<sup>61</sup>

It was in this context that Japanese policy-makers looked to commercialize nitrate at home and came also to recognize their compatibilities with Chile. Japanese officials likewise identified Chile as an excellent candidate for interstate commerce, a site for Japanese businesses to commence operations, the supply of raw materials desperately needed in Japan (principally nitrogen fertilizer), and mass emigration.

Numerous Japanese officials utilized the same Pacific visionary language to describe Japanese interests in Chile. As early as 1897, Japanese minister to the US, Toru Hoshi, wrote to his Chilean counterpart, Domingo Gana Cruz, that "Chile and Japan, each bordering upon a great ocean that affords a natural highway, are both, by geographic position...well-fitted to enter conventional relations that promise mutual benefit."<sup>62</sup> Hoshi elaborated that "Japan manufactures and produces many things which no doubt could be used with advantage by the Chilean people, and some of the products in which Chile is so rich could doubtless be utilized in Japan."<sup>63</sup> Japanese Foreign Minister Count Komura praised Chilean-Japanese relations in 1910 as a new frontier of progress for both states, noting that while "Japan, for a long time, has cultivated relations with the United States...[it was] looking to make up for that lost time and develop with Chile" goodwill and, more importantly, commerce.<sup>64</sup> In 1911, Mr. Hirata—a businessmen entrenched in the industry of artificial fertilizers in Japan—likewise asserted that Japanese nitrate

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<sup>61</sup> On Japanese modernity and economy, see William Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan: Political, Economic, and Social Change Since 1850*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). Marius Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000). Naofumi Nakamura, "The Present State of Research on 'Zaibatsu': The Case of Mitsubishi," *Social Science Japan Journal* 5, no.2 (2002): 233-242. Elise Tipton, *Modern Japan: A Social and Political history*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008). Pedro Iacobelli, Danton Leary, and Shinnosuke Takahashi, eds. *Transnational Japan as History: Empire, Migration, and Social Movements* (Handmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>62</sup> Toru Hoshi to Domingo Gana Cruz, February 13, 1897, Fondo Histórico, Volume 247, RREE Archive, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Anselmo Hevia to Luis Izquierdo, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 33, June 30, 1910, Fondo RREE, Volume 1525, ARNAD.

consumption could grow annually by at least 10% and exceed 100,000 tons should nitrate preserve its competitive price.<sup>65</sup>

By 1910, Japan opened a formal Legation in Santiago which centered relations with Chile, Peru, and Bolivia; and appointed Eki Hioki, a senior diplomat with experience in the US and Germany, as its Minister Plenipotentiary. Attending a diplomatic function shortly after his arrival to Chile, Eki spoke and lauded the similarities shared by the Chilean and Japanese people. He noted that he received nothing but warmth in Chile and appreciated the greetings of “Banzai Nippon!” in Chile’s streets.<sup>66</sup> In April of 1912, Eki returned to Japan and took it upon himself to spread the gospel of the Pacific vision to which he had become an adherent while in Chile. Eki traveled across the Japanese mainland to lecture before many influential Japanese businessmen, bankers, state officials, local chambers of commerce, and interested organizations such as the Japanese Latin American Association, the Advanced School of Commerce, and Tokyo’s Imperial University. Eki pressed the issue of commercial exchange with Chile and embellished his presentations on Chilean political economy and history with projected images displaying Chile’s most prominent officials, monuments, cities, nitrate plants, agricultural land, and nature. Eki delivered lectures in the following cities that he had strategically selected: Tokyo hosted Japan’s most influential financial institutions; Osaka represented the nation’s leading industrial region; and Yokohama, Kobe, and Nagoya comprised Japan’s most active ports.<sup>67</sup> At one dinner banquet hosted by the Nitrate Delegation of Japan in Tokyo’s exclusive Imperial Hotel, Eki remarked that “I have tried to awaken interest in Japan towards all things South American, describing that continent as a land of unlimited possibilities. I have ultimately painted Chile as the nicest place in the world.”<sup>68</sup>

Other Japanese industries likewise hoped to establish themselves in Chile. For example, in 1910, entrepreneur Tokujiro Shimizu, of the Shomizu Shoten commercial house and a merchant in Yokohama, opened a store selling small Japanese wares in Valparaíso and later Santiago after witnessing the demand for Japanese goods when South Americans landed in Yokohama.<sup>69</sup> In Santiago, the Senda and Company began operating in Santiago in 1912.<sup>70</sup> In that same year, Toyo Hogeï Kaisha—a large fishing firm that sold whale byproducts—nearly took root in southern Chile in the 1910s. The company’s president, Juro Oka, even visited Chile in

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<sup>65</sup> Alfredo Irrázaval to Ministro de Chile en Londres (forwarded to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile), Oficio No. 283, August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Speech by Eki Hioki, 1910, Fondo RREE, Volume 1443, ARNAD.

<sup>67</sup> Alfredo Irrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 24, April 9, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>68</sup> Alfredo Irrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 244/No. 51A, July 4, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>69</sup> Ariel Takeda, Naomi Hirose, María Teresa de Senda, “Los Inmigrantes Japoneses y los Nikkei Chilenos: Perspectiva General Histórica,” Sociedad Japonesa de Bienficiencia, Proyecto Internacional Investigación Nikkei, Comisión PIIN-Chile, 2000. Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan. 1003. And Fujisaki Yasuo, ed. *Nihonjin imin: shasshin, kaiga shūsei 3*, Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 1997. Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan, 148.

<sup>70</sup> Roberto de Andraca Barbás, “Relaciones entre Chile y Japón: un siglo de acercamiento,” *Revista de Estudios Internacionales* 39 no.154 (2006): 162.

1910 and opened several provisional offices in Valparaíso, Concepción, and Chiloé island. Oka had already begun industrially fishing on Mexico's Pacific coast. The idea fell through by 1913 over Chilean suspicions that Oka desired actually to industrially extract Chilean algae; but not before numerous Chilean defenders of the Pacific vision endorsed the prospect of a Chilean-Japanese fishing industry.<sup>71</sup> In 1914, Japanese businessmen founded a branch of the Pacific Trading Company in Chile (in Japan the firm was headquartered in the industrial center of Osaka) which conducted commerce between the countries in other goods such as copper, wine, and leather.<sup>72</sup> By the 1930s, the firm emerged as the leading importer of Chilean copper in Japan.<sup>73</sup> In other words, Japanese actors involved in promoting relations with Chile likewise envisioned ties founded on compatibilities in maritime geography, commercial needs, and historical timing.

The Japanese press simultaneously weighed in on the efforts to install Chilean nitrate in Japan. Chilean diplomat-businessmen attended most carefully to the several influential English-language periodicals published in Asia that reported on significant matters of foreign relations and political economy. For instance, in 1910 *The Japan Daily Herald* wrote that while currently “commerce between Japan and South America is only in its infancy,” it offered massive potential and “in political-commercial aspects, [South American] republics have a bright future.”<sup>74</sup> In that same year, *The Kobe Herald* described how deteriorating relations with the US encouraged Japanese to “turn their eyes toward South America in the hope of opening up good business relations with Chili, Argentina, etc.”<sup>75</sup> It was no accident or coincidence that Chileans carefully managed their engagement with the Japanese press and transmitted to Santiago original and translated articles in which nitrate or Chile received mention.

### **Building a Logistical Infrastructure**

All that was missing for the Pacific vision to come to life, these Chileans argued, was the requisite infrastructure to carry goods affordably, reliably, and directly from Chile to Japan. The sturdy institutions that comprised this infrastructure would then manage marketing efforts, guarantee deliveries, and provide advantageous exchange rates between the Chilean peso and Japanese yen. A 1907 commercial policy report authored by Chilean consul general in Yokohama, Alfredo Viel Cavero, provides a clear example:

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<sup>71</sup> Mauricio Jara Fernández, “Chile y Japón En La Decada de Los '10: Un Homenaje, Un Negocio y Una Discriminación,” *Notas Históricas y Geográficas* 7 no.8 (1996): 93-97.

<sup>72</sup> Jaime Lagos, *Chile and Japan: 100 Years of History* (1997). Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan, 13.

<sup>73</sup> Manuel Cuadros to Gerente COVENSA Santiago, August 15, 1938, Oficio No. 28/38, Fondo Salitre, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 262, ANH.

<sup>74</sup> Article translation for the *The Japan Daily Herald*, June 21, 1910, “Emigración Japonesa a Sud-América.” Anselmo Hevia to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 39, July 24, 1910, Fondo RREE, Volume 1525, ARNAD, 1-5.

<sup>75</sup> *The Kobe Herald*, “Chili and Japan.” April 14, 1910, Fondo RREE, Volume 1525, ARNAD.

To achieve [Chilean-Japanese commerce], in the first place we need to establish regular and affordable merchant steamship services, direct banking connections offering reasonable exchanges, and competent and active commercial representatives. The extraordinary cost of indirect communications and exchanges is the cause of the elevated prices and is what obligates merchants to offer Chilean products secondarily that they do not even have in supply. What's more, consumers know that Chilean products are not delivered on time...The United States, England, France, and Germany possess established representatives in Japanese markets who maintain constant communication, either by clients or branch offices, with their importers, both large and small, and supervise where their credit goes...This is what we lack.<sup>76</sup>

According to Cavero, nitrate simply required state support and investment in order to claim durable profits in Japan and compete with more mature European and US commercial institutions. The problem of thin institutionalization persisted even into the late 1920s when Chilean consul to Japan, C. Alvarez de la Rivera, reported that “Japan does not consume, currently, the quantity of Chilean nitrate that it should. It would serve us to send an expert to this country to study exclusively Japanese agriculture and its relations with Chilean nitrate.”<sup>77</sup>

Establishing direct shipping lines between Chile and Japan remained the most crucial and persistently absent piece of commercial infrastructure.<sup>78</sup> Since the 1890s, the vessels of the British-owned Royal Mail Steamship Line, the US-owned Pacific Steamship Company, and the Japanese-owned Nippon Yusen Kaisha (the Japan Mail Shipping Line) expensively and slowly transshipped small quantities of goods between the two countries. In the 1890s, Chilean and Japanese actors estimated that any company could profitably undertake direct routes between Chilean and Japanese ports by sourcing from Asia goods that Chile currently imported from elsewhere in exchange for nitrate shipments. These actors reasoned that if Chile purchased from Japan significant portions of its rice (currently sourced from the US, Peru, and Spain), tea (imported from China), and textiles, porcelain, crockery (acquired from Europe), direct and regular Chile-Japan steamship routes could possess bidirectional profit and incentive to accelerate shipments of nitrate—the commodity whose promise made the entire undertaking worthwhile.

As early as 1899, Chilean Minister Carlos Morla Vicuña proposed that Chile and Japan should establish a steamship company “with sufficient capital to undertake the direct importation of nitrate to Japan.”<sup>79</sup> Regularizing these trans-Pacific routes, Morla elaborated, would blow wide open Japan's nitrate market while also helping “all the countries of the occidental coast of

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<sup>76</sup> Alfredo Viel Cabero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, September 27, 1907, Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD, 42-45

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Chile never assembled a significant merchant fleet of its own. *The Japan Times* reported in 1940, for example, that Chilean vessels shipped only approximately 6% (or, 24,500,000 of 700,000,000 pesos-worth) of its own products. *The Japan Times*, “Chile May Buy Vessels, Merge all Ship Lines,” January 17, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD.

<sup>79</sup> Carlos Morla Vicuña, *Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Imperio Japon, 1900*.

South America, as it will put them in greater and more frequent contact with Japan and the other oriental countries.” Regularizing routes would also instruct mariners how to overcome the hardships of the Pacific that included extensive time at sea, heavy winds, torrential rains, and seasonal typhoons.<sup>80</sup> Chilean state actors at home lamented in 1915 that “the exportation of the product is mainly done to certain European ports who have the monopoly over the nitrate market, thus consumers depend upon these markets for their supply. This irregular distribution and supply of the product tends to disappear with the establishment of new steamship lines and in the future, the supply will be made directly from Chile to the consumers.”<sup>81</sup>

In 1896, specifically to increase commerce with the Americas, the Japanese state founded Toyo Kisen Kaisha (the Oriental Steamship Company) that first regularized direct routes linking Yokohama, Hong Kong, San Francisco, and numerous ports in South America. Toyo was affiliated in South America with the US-owned shipping giant Grace and Company. The state founded Toyo in combination with private shareholders, and federal law bound the state to continuously and heavily subsidize the firm. Toyo initially struggled to afford a fleet of ships and even return a profit and produced irregular lapses in commerce. Indeed, for years its costs outstripped its earnings and the Japanese state covered losses of millions of yen between the 1890s and 1910.<sup>82</sup> Between 1902 and 1912, the Japanese state disbursed approximately 77 million yen in subsidies for steamship and navigation companies,<sup>83</sup> which propelled Japan to claim the world’s third largest merchant marine with a global reach.<sup>84</sup> So even though Toyo Kisen produced significant losses, the state remained legally obligated to subsidize its operations and simultaneously retained hope that it would ultimately pay off to finance a Japanese-owned firm that directly linked Japanese and South American ports.

Toyo’s fleet of three British-made ships, following a series of fits and starts, commenced a regular trimestral service between Japanese, Chilean (especially Valparaíso, Iquique, and Coronel), and other American ports by early 1906 and more regularly by 1909 and 1910. The first Toyo vessels departed from Hong Kong to South America and exchanged their cargoes of immigrants and rice for Chilean nitrate.<sup>85</sup>

For Chilean businessmen-diplomats, supporting Toyo represented a national obligation and insisted that the nitrate industry should treat Toyo’s line to South America “as if it were our

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> “Chile, Published by the Chilean government,” in *Zig-Zag*, 1915, 223. Accessed at The National Diet Library of Japan, Tokyo, Japan, Call No. 918.3-C536c.

<sup>82</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 30, May 1, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>83</sup> Irarrázaval calculated a doubling of Japanese merchant ships in service from 1,441 in 1902 to 2,789 by 1912. Alfredo Irarrázaval to Agustín Edwards, Ministro de Chile en Londres, Oficio No. 283 August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 2.

<sup>84</sup> On Japanese steamships and shipping, William D. Wray, *Mitsubishi and the N.Y.K., 1870-1914: Business Strategy in the Japanese Shipping Industry* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984). Chida Tomohei and Peter N. Davies, *The Japanese Shipping and Shipbuilding Industries: A History of Their Modern Growth* (London: Athlone Press, 1990). Elijah Greenstein, “Sailing Under a Rising Sun: A Global History of Japanese Shipping in Empire and at War,” (PhD. Diss, Princeton University, 2019).

<sup>85</sup> Fujisaki Yasuo, ed. *Nihonjin imin: shasshin, kaiga shūsei* 3, Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentā, 1997. Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan, 147.

own.”<sup>86</sup> Irarrázaval asked Santiago, rhetorically, how Chile could possibly refrain from wholeheartedly supporting this Japanese firm “that has done nothing other than serve, while taking significant losses, Chilean commerce?”<sup>87</sup> The problem remained, nevertheless, that Toyo’s total annual cargo capacity of approximately 29,000 metric tons could not satisfy the demand for nitrate in Japan. Lack of freight space had even forced Chileans to cancel predetermined nitrate sales to Japan.<sup>88</sup>

In their quest monetize both directions of the Chile-Japan route, diplomat-businessmen lamented that Chilean consumption of Japanese products did not meet Toyo’s fleet capacity of approximately 29,000 tons. However, the nitrate industry required large amounts of combustible raw materials to power its plants; and Chile *did* already import from the other side of the Pacific substantial quantities of Australian coal (alongside imports of US and British coal). Used to power motor and steam machinery in nitrate production plants and to fuel railroads in the Chilean north, between 1911 and 1923, every 80,000 tons of nitrate required approximately 127,000 tons of combustible materials such as coal, crude oil, coke, and fuel briquettes.<sup>89</sup> Before the First World War, the nitrate industry consumed on average 650,000 tons of coal and 250,000 tons of oil annually (much of which they previously sourced from Britain from Cardiff) out of total coal imports of over 650,000 tons.<sup>90</sup>

Despite the state’s energies and investments from the foreign nitrate producers’ conglomerates, Chilean production of fossil fuels simply could not meet Chile’s domestic demand.<sup>91</sup> Irarrázaval thus proposed that Chile maximize Toyo’s fleet capacity in its routes to Chile with coal sourced from Japan, or even possibly China (rather than Australia), which would “accomplish the double result of cheapening the price of coal in Chile, and facilitate the transport of nitrate to this market that offers so much promise for the future.” Japan’s own coal production (which supplied railroads, steamships, and industrial manufacturing) had skyrocketed in recent

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<sup>86</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 30, May 1, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD. And Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 234, June 25, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>87</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 330, October 23, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>88</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Agustín Edwards, Ministro de Chile en Londres, Oficio No. 283 August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 27.

<sup>89</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera* (Santiago, Chile: Sociedad Imprenta y Litiografía Universo, 1925), 115-116.

<sup>90</sup> Bertrand estimated that each unit of nitrate produced required 2.5 to 4 units of coal and 4.5 to 6 units of oil. Alejandro Bertrand, *The Chilean Nitrate Industry: Technology and Economics* (Paris: Imprimerie Vaugirard, 1920), Volume 5, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, Fondo Salitre, ANH, 52.

<sup>91</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera* (Santiago, Chile: Sociedad Imprenta y Litiografía Universo, 1925), 115-116.

years and in 1910 began small volumes of exports.<sup>92</sup> This possibility was foiled however, when it became clear that Toyo's ships could not transport coal due to its high combustibility.<sup>93</sup>

To further incentivize Toyo to expand its fleet and accelerate its shipping schedules, Irarrázaval also proposed that the Chilean government subsidize Toyo for every ton of nitrate shipped up to 30,000 tons and additionally for every ton thereafter. Toyo's leaders eagerly embraced Irarrázaval's Chilean subsidy proposal. Should the plan proceed, Toyo committed to expand its fleet by three ships over three years which would, by 1915, support an annual freight capacity of 70,000 tons. With larger cargoes, Toyo's executives explained, their fleet could complete twelve round trips annually and transport people, goods, and correspondence between the two countries (and other ports in the Americas and Asia where Toyo's ships visited regularly) at reduced costs.<sup>94</sup> Irarrázaval likewise supposed that Chilean subsidies for Japanese shippers to carry nitrate would enable Japan to "succeed in its agenda of commercial expansion towards the Pacific" which the Japanese state understood as "the best policy for the future." Irarrázaval thus described this emerging Pacific nitrate chain as a shared imperative for Chile and Japan.<sup>95</sup>

Increasing Toyo's routes could also enable the accumulation of nitrate stocks in Japan from which Japanese distributors could reliably source their nitrate year-round. Japanese agriculturalists negotiated over, purchased, delivered, and applied fertilizer based on Japan's fertilizer year which spanned from August 1 to July 31. Ideally, therefore, reliable stocks would enable distributors to access nitrate at opportune seasonal moments and avoid dramatic price fluctuations based on supply and demand.<sup>96</sup> The Chilean Minister to Japan in 1922, Victor Vicente Robles, echoed the necessity of establishing abundant stocks in Japan, noting that "it would be quite challenging to acquaint the virtues of nitrate to Japanese farmers if they cannot even acquire it."<sup>97</sup>

Chilean diplomat-businessmen in Japan felt perplexed at the neglect received from Chileans in Santiago. As early as 1889, Chilean consul in Yokohama, Alfredo Corq Port, urged a hesitant Chilean government to invest in the "time and numerous and competent personnel"

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<sup>92</sup> In 1909 Japan produced approximately 14,986,403 tons of coal which represented a total monetary value of 16 million Yen or 40 million Chilean pesos. Alfredo Irarrázaval to Enrique Rodríguez, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 231/No. 46 June 24, 1911, Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD, 16, 20. And Alfredo Irarrázaval to Enrique Rodríguez, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio, Oficio No. 19, December 23, 1911, Fondo RREE, Volume 1607, ARNAD.

<sup>93</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 30, May 1, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>94</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 30, May 1, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>95</sup> Ministro de Chile en Londres, Oficio No. 283 August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 5.

<sup>96</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 220, June 24, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>97</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 330, October 23, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>98</sup> Victor Vicente Robles, "Memoria del Enviado Extraordinario I Ministro Plenipotenciario de Chile en Japón Presentado" to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 6A. April 1, 1922, Fondo RREE, Volume 2341, ARNAD.

necessary to unlock profits awaiting in Japan.<sup>98</sup> Diplomat Alfredo Irarrázaval articulated frustration with Chile's government most pointedly when he stressed to Santiago in 1911 that "had this spectacular development of nitrate consumption occurred in any other part of the world, we would have a justified reason for being complacent, but this current result obtained in such a short period in Japan, provides for us a truly promising situation."<sup>99</sup> Irarrázaval assured that Japan possessed "a collection of favorable conditions, powerful players, and good intentions; all that is lacking is the initiative to unite all of these factors that are perfectly prepared so that we can utilize them to further our own wealth."<sup>100</sup> Often left without direction, Irarrázaval wrote exasperatedly to Santiago in June of 1912 that "if ever there was a case where a diplomat needed instructions, it would be this one."<sup>101</sup>

Differences in culture and language also exacerbated the challenges under which Chilean diplomat-businessmen in Japan conducted their work. Irarrázaval commented that gathering information in Japan "proceeded more slowly than in other parts due to the often insurmountable difficulties of language."<sup>102</sup> The problem still remained in 1921 when Chilean diplomat Victor Vicente Robles explained that his assignments seemed "especially difficult in Japan, what with the language, the natural Japanese restraint, and the suspicion that accompanies any action made by another national."<sup>103</sup> Chileans in Japan often felt overworked and underpaid; Chilean Minister to Japan, Víctor Vicente Robles, commented in 1921 that the cost of living in Japan exceeded "anywhere else in the world"<sup>104</sup> and had "quadrupled" between 1914 and 1921.<sup>105</sup> In April of 1935 even, Chilean representative, Sergio Montt, noted that corresponding in English "is the custom in this country and the only practical way of understanding each other. Sending communications in Spanish and, even more difficult, accompanying them with correct Japanese translations, is work which would take many days."<sup>106</sup>

Chilean advocates of the Pacific vision also lamented that the London-based Nitrate Propaganda Association, which orchestrated and financed marketing efforts, often operated under complete ignorance towards local conditions in Japan. Chileans (accompanied by British

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<sup>98</sup> Alfredo Corq Port, "Salitre" (Conclusión) en *La Libertad Electoral*, Año III, No. 919, Santiago, 27 de febrero de 1889, 2. Quoted in Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japonés*, pg. 32, footnote 56.

<sup>99</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Enrique Rodríguez, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, December 14, 1911, Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>100</sup> Victor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 25D, August 8, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>101</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 220, June 24, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>102</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Enrique Rodríguez, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, December 14, 1911, Fondo RREE, Volume 1607, ARNAD, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Victor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 69A. December 31, 1921, Fondo RREE, Volume 2300, ARNAD.

<sup>104</sup> Victor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No.6.A, April 1, 1922, Fondo RREE, Volume 2231, ARNAD. And [Carta] 1938 Agosto 14, Tokio [a] Arturo Alessandri Palma. Martínez Prieto, Marcial, 1938. Accessed at Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.

<sup>105</sup> Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 35D Confidencial, October 20, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>106</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 26, March 16, 1935. Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD.

representatives of the Nitrate Delegation of Japan) frequently traveled around the Japanese mainland alongside Japanese colleagues and translators to advertise nitrate but reported on the inefficacy of marketing strategies conceived in Santiago or London. The problem lingered into the 1920s when Chilean consul in Yokohama, Arturo Rose-Innes, replied to Santiago in 1926 that advertising materials written in English and Spanish would fail because “Japanese farmers generally ignore English...if you want to develop marketing in Japan, it is indispensable that you employ the language of the nation.”<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the London-based Propaganda Association was often slow to advance funding for marketing efforts and Chileans in Japan frequently fronted the money out of their own pockets and billed London for the costs. It is not always clear that these Chileans received reimbursement. Chileans in Japan proposed that the prescription to the ailments of an underdeveloped commercial infrastructure would be the establishment of carefully informed business policy managed by actors attuned to and specialized in Japanese agriculture.

### **Japan as a Steppingstone**

Chilean and Japanese nitrate actors alike envisioned Japan as a steppingstone from which to expand nitrate consumption throughout all of Asia, and particularly in China. Dreams of massive markets in China obviously enticed the Chileans; and Japanese firms grasped the promise of profits via commission for nitrate sales in Chile and saw them as a channel for deepening Japanese influence across East Asia. As early as 1889, Chilean Consul Alfredo Corq Port wrote publicly that taking advantage of Asian markets, “particularly in China, will produce a true revolution in our nitrate industry.”<sup>108</sup> In 1899, Chilean Consul Luiz Izquierdo asserted that “In addition to Japan, there is Korea, China, the Philippines, the island of Java, India, and all of the countries of the Extreme Orient, with enormous plantations of rice, tea, and tobacco. The imagination gets lost calculating the development and the importance that this completely new market can have for our nitrate.”<sup>109</sup> In 1907, Alfredo Viel Cavero wrote that “Japan also aspires to be the intermediary in Asian commerce with the west.”<sup>110</sup> In 1912, Irarrázaval encouraged Santiago to target China, arguing that “the south of China offers a market six times more important than Japan.”<sup>111</sup> Chilean diplomat Victor Vicente Robles wrote in 1923 that “Japan needs nitrate, but more than Japan proper, Korea and China need nitrate.”<sup>112</sup> Alejandro Arce,

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<sup>107</sup> Arturo Rose-Innes to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 16. March 20, 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2530, ARNAD.

<sup>108</sup> Alfredo Corq Port, “Salitre” (Conclusión) en *La Libertad Electoral*, Año III, No. 919, Santiago, 27 de febrero de 1889, 2. Quoted in Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 33, footnote 58.

<sup>109</sup> Archivo Nacional, Fondo Relaciones Exteriores, Ministerio Relaciones Exteriores. Servicio Consular. “Correspondencia del Consulado General de Chile en Japón, China, y Filipinas, 1899-1906,” Vol. 870. (Segundo informe de Izquierdo al Presidente de la Asociación Salitrera de Propaganda, Eduardo Vijil Zañaratu, fechado en Yokohama el 9 de septiembre de 1899.) Quoted in Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 139, footnote 29.

<sup>110</sup> Alfredo Viel Cavero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, pg.11, September 27, 1907. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>111</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 30, May 1, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>112</sup> Victor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 21.A, May 11, 1922, Fondo RREE, Volume 2341, ARNAD.

Chile's Consul General in China, charged with opening China to nitrate consumption, commented to Santiago's *La Nación* on March 22, 1929 "this great country can and will be the biggest market for Chilean Nitrate in the not too distant future."<sup>113</sup>

It was only in 1915 that Chile initiated formal diplomatic relations with China and signed a commercial treaty the following year.<sup>114</sup> But it remained exceedingly difficult to export nitrate to China. Most importantly, the Chinese government prohibited the import of nitrate altogether due to its classification as an ingredient in gunpowder and munitions productions, and Chile's few diplomats stationed there possessed no formal commercial treaty or institutional bargaining power (until 1915) to negotiate a change in policy.<sup>115</sup> Coordination between Chilean consuls in Shanghai and Hong Kong also remained limited and confused, and ranking Chileans in Japan often reported the absence or significant delay of reports arriving from China.<sup>116</sup> Chilean diplomat-businessmen additionally often seemed at a complete loss to understand Chinese politics and therefore often did not know with whom they could even try to negotiate. Following the 1911 Chinese civil war that precipitated the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and initiated the regional warlord period, Chileans complained of the challenge of doing business in China where, according to one Chilean diplomat in 1923, the "government changes weekly."<sup>117</sup> Consecutive generations of Chilean representatives almost invariably identified Japan as the launching pad for expansive nitrate sales throughout Asia, but prying open Chinese markets remained a challenge.

Chilean relations in China finally advanced in the 1920s. Working upon a base of formally initiated Chilean-Chinese relations and a nitrate propaganda office opened in China in February 1925, the London-based Association of Nitrate Producers concluded a three-year contract with the German firm, Arnhold and Company, to import nitrate into China in the small thousands of tons. Long established in China, Arnhold granted to Chilean nitrate much-needed affiliations and a robust network for distribution and sales led by young Chinese men who spoke the local dialects of China's immense and diverse south.<sup>118</sup> A combination of funding from the Association of Nitrate Producers and the Chilean state also briefly established in Tientsin the Chilean Fertilizer Company.<sup>119</sup> By 1928, the then-exclusive distributor for nitrate in Japan—

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<sup>113</sup> "El consumo del salitre será efectivo entre poco," *La Nación*, March 22, 1929, included as anexo to Santiago de Ossa to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 37, June 5, 1929, Fondo RREE, Volume 2734, ARNAD.

<sup>114</sup> Pedro Iacobelli, "Ambivalences orientalistes : économie chilienne et marchés asiatiques, 1900-1940" *Cahiers des Amériques latines* 100-101 (2022): 223-242.

<sup>115</sup> Chileans even appealed to the Hague International Court to clarify that Chilean nitrate manufactured from nitrogenous caliche ore differed from potassium nitrate which, while resembling Chilean nitrate, was altogether a different product and an ingredient far more serviceable than the Chilean product for the large scale production of gunpowder and munitions. Aurelio Bascuñán Montes, *Miscellanea historia-diplomática: y sobre intercambios comerciales Chilenos* (Santiago, Chile: Imprenta Cervantes, 1908), 37-42.

<sup>116</sup> Alfredo Viel Cabero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, "Memorandum," September 27, 1907, Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>117</sup> Pedro Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 35, April 15, 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2540, ARNAD, 4-5.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Needing the contacts and clout of German commercial contacts and institutions to conduct commerce in China, Alejandro Arce Suárez, Chile's Consul General in China, helped found this firm in association with the Bremen

Mitsui Bussan Kaisha—evidently founded a subsidiary named the Chilean Nitrate Fertilizer Company Ltd. in Kwantung once Chilean officials there convinced the state to authorize limited nitrate imports.<sup>120</sup> Thus, nitrate businessmen by the mid-1920s mobilized the growing apparatus for nitrate sales that they had built in Japan to both combat new forms of competition and finally enter Chinese markets whose profits, they trusted, were likewise right around the corner.

A 1925 Chilean Ministry of the Interior report calculated the following actual and potential global consumption of nitrogen across world regions for the year 1922:

Region	Actual Consumption (metric quintals)	Potential Consumption (metric quintals)
Europe	25,473,625	117,150,110
America (Continent)	11,385,180	134,150,485
Africa	1,006,101	8,968,864
<b>Asia</b>	<b>2,164,490</b>	<b>144,507,519</b>
Oceania	58,260	4,826,417
Total	40,087,565	409,603,395

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Though Asia currently claimed merely .005% of the annual nitrate market, it possessed a potential increase of 6575%—or, 35% of the entire global market and a larger share than any other region.<sup>122</sup> This document offers no methodological explanation for these aspirational figures, but illustrates that even government officials who were not necessarily Pacific visionaries admitted the current underperformance but completely untapped and colossal potential of Asian nitrate consumption.

### **Building the Pacific Vision from the Ground Up**

In late 1912, the city government of Nagano—a prefecture location in a mountainous, heavily agricultural zone to the northwest of Tokyo—invited the Chilean Legation in Tokyo for a weekend visit hoping to accelerate the region’s growing consumption of nitrate fertilizer. (This is the episode with which this chapter began). On the morning of Friday November 1, 1912, Alfredo Irarrázaval (Chilean Minister to Japan), Eduardo Ruiz Vergara (Secretary for the Chilean Legation), Mr. Prat (Chilean Military Attaché in Japan), and the Legation’s interpreter

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Colonial China Trading Company. This project fell through, however, to do the continued lack of the Chinese government’s import permissions, the dearth of Chilean diplomatic representation in China, and Arce’s overpromising of the simplicity of establishing this business in China. Santiago de Ossa to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 37, June 5, 1929, Fondo RREE, Volume 2734, ARNAD.

<sup>120</sup> Anexo #43 (Mitsui Bussan Kaisha to Santiago de Ossa, August 13, 1928) to Santiago de Ossa to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 39/2, August 26, 1928, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1123, RREE Archive.

<sup>121</sup> This table is copied from: Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera*, 79.

<sup>122</sup> Only Oceania’s potential increase of 8184% superseded Asia’s potential. But even then, Oceania’s total consumption, under these most optimistic of outlooks, would not even approximate Asia’s

boarded a private train car from Tokyo that Nagano officials reserved for the Chilean traveling party. Many distinguished Japanese figures accompanied the Chileans: Mr. Watase (President of the Plants, Seeds, and Crops Company of Tokyo), Mr. Murakami (Director of the Japanese Foreign Language School and Secretary of the Japanese Latin American Society), Mr. Mizushima (a former Nagano city official and member of the city's chamber of commerce), and Mr. Kida (evidently an interpreter employed by the Nitrate Delegation of Japan).<sup>123</sup>

As the party proceeded westward on the rail line that passed through Kyoto before turning back north towards Nagano, Irarrázaval detailed in sentimentalized the region's sights, sounds, agricultural prowess, and market potential: "there is not, perhaps, in any other part of the world such vast plains in which a greater amount of people apply such detailed, subtle practices in intensive agriculture." Irarrázaval also drew from comparisons to Chile to describe Nagano as one of "the most considerable and important agricultural regions of the Empire." He wrote that the journey, "seen from train, offers such a complete resemblance to the route to the south of Santiago; the similarity is complete when from the west emerge the Kai mountains and the snowy cone of Fuji." He also measured travel through Chilean landmarks, remarking that when the party stopped briefly in the city of Takasaki, they had traveled approximately the distance between Santiago and Valparaíso.<sup>124</sup> His affected portrayals of the purity of Japanese farming, the potential for nitrate consumption, and Japan's sensory resemblance to Chile only emboldened Irarrázaval's confidence in Chile's inherent ties with and profitable future in Japan.

The Chilean-Japanese traveling party scaled the mountainous route and arrived in Nagano city by early afternoon. The Chileans recounted their surprise when the large and enthusiastic welcome included local press and Nagano officials, one of whom brandished a large Chilean flag. To his delight, Irarrázaval came to learn that this local official, Mr. Nishigawa (a member of the region's Fertilizer Distributors Association), was "burning with the desire" to inform Irarrázaval that "he owed his fortune to our fertilizer" and felt a "conscious obligation" to inform and thank the Chileans.<sup>125</sup>

While subsequently touring the region, Chilean and Japanese officials got down to business assessing how they could expand nitrate consumption in Nagano. While Nishigawa admitted that he also dealt in other fertilizers better suited for certain crops (such as ammonium sulphate for paddy rice), it was in mulberry tree cultivation where nitrate offered the greatest promise in Japanese agriculture. Nishigawa elaborated that application of the Chilean fertilizer had dramatically increased mulberry leaf and silkworm yields in recent years. According to Nishigawa, nitrate generated a "marvelous process" for agriculture in Nagano and that now they "laugh" thinking of the times when frosts killed crops, especially the mulberry germs, considering that now nitrate-infused plants easily withstood early season cold. However, Nishigawa pointed to the predicament of the rising price of nitrate which now cost "an arm and a leg." Nishigawa previously evaded price fluctuations by accumulating his own stocks but

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<sup>123</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 1.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-4.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

indicated that prices had never before risen so substantially and now were severely restricting the commodity's accessibility to small farmers.<sup>126</sup>

By evening, the Chileans returned to the train station where Nagano's mayor, Mr. Makino, guided the party via rickshaw to their accommodations at the Saihokukan hotel (which stands to this day). Local officials arranged curated reception for the Chileans throughout the city's streets led by large gatherings of friendly locals. Indeed, the Chileans marveled that at every door hung a Japanese flag and a large arch in the city constructed of sugi tree branches read "*Bienvenido*." Chilean and Japanese flags adorned the hotel itself and the Chileans relayed their awe at residing in the same hotel rooms where, wall hanging indicated, Japanese royalty lodged while visiting the city.<sup>127</sup>

The following morning, the Chileans toured the Zenkoji and Daihongwan Buddhist temples before convening that afternoon for a public business meeting in the Nagano prefecture's large conference hall. Intertwined Chilean and Japanese flags decorated the venue and local press later estimated that the audience approximated a thousand people. Attendees included city officials, press, farmers, industrialists, and other interested locals. John Struthers, the Scottish agronomist and leading officer of London's Nitrate Delegation of Japan, also arrived in Nagano for the festivities. Mr. Kosaka, President of the city's chamber of commerce, initiated the meeting and invited others to share a few words, including John Struthers. Other speakers included Mr. Yokoi, a professor of agronomy at the Imperial University of Tokyo, who insisted on the importance of agricultural education for Japan's national prosperity. Richard Kirby, the Chilean Consul in Tokyo, delivered a stirring speech in Japanese praising the nation's progress and development. Mr. Shiga, a professor at the University of Waseda, also lectured on Chilean politics and history under Chilean president José Manuel Balmaceda (1886-1891) and emphasized that the two countries shared the prestige of remaining undefeated in war. Mr. Murakami, Director of the Japanese Foreign Language School, translated into the other language each of these speeches in real time and himself emphasized the importance of Japanese acquisition of South American languages.<sup>128</sup>

Irarrázaval's subsequent presentation elaborated in the clearest possible terms his Pacific vision premised on nitrate commerce. He noted that Nagano perfectly captured how "the entirety of Japan resembles my country not only in general terms but additionally in an infinite diversity of details." He likened the national territories in their similar riverine networks, mountainous stretches, volcanic and mineral-rich earth, and climate. "[It was] only twelve years ago that Chile and Japan did not know each other, situated at the extremes of the same trans-Pacific diagonal...without even suspecting the numerous similarities and parallel destinies that nature had bestowed upon them." Chile and Japan also shared "the same calling towards maritime

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 14-15. And Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, anexos, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD. "Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Ministro de Chile en el Japón, Don Alfredo Irarrázaval, en la Gran Asamblea de Industriales y Comerciantes verificada en Nagano el día 2 de noviembre de 1912."

commerce” and both countries maintained “along their extensive coastlines innumerable ports that seemingly invite them to conquer the ocean.”<sup>129</sup> Irarrázaval’s remarks in Nagano could not have revealed any more clearly the alignments in economics, maritime geography, history, and culture through which actors on both sides understood their inherent ties.

The following day, the Chileans and twenty-four members of the Nagano Festival Committee visited various silk factories via rickshaw in Susaka—a city within the Nagano prefecture but located about 10 kilometers to the west of Nagano city. Susaka’s mayor and a chorus of greetings and fireworks received the Chileans. The party sat for a formal tea in the home of Mr. Koshi, president of the Association of Silk Producers in Susaka, before briefly touring the nearly a dozen factories that the Association maintained and that were operated by approximately 5000, primarily women, workers. Irarrázaval praised the excellent labor conditions that included a pristine and impeccable infirmary.<sup>130</sup>

That afternoon, the traveling party returned to Nagano for another large conference before another nearly 800 attendees. Makino, the city’s governor, invited Irarrázaval to sit at a seat of honor on stage while a band played, to the Chileans’ delight, the Chilean national anthem. While Makino reinforced the high esteem in which Japanese held Chileans, a number of elegantly dressed Japanese women, who Irarrázaval reported were all daughters of the city’s elites, presented ornately wrapped gifts of local products including fruit, silks, silkworm eggs, and linens. Irarrázaval retained a number of these gifts for himself and sent others that he believed to be of some instructive quality for Chilean industry to the Chilean Manufacturing Development Association. The conference culminated with chants of “Banzais” for Chile’s president and for Japan’s emperor and the performance of several traditional Japanese dances in which many of the city’s merchants performed as well as groups of geishas who had been commissioned to travel from Tokyo for the event.<sup>131</sup>

A festival in the city’s central park party followed that evening. Irarrázaval discussed business with numerous of the city’s entrepreneurs and officials, and evidently all partook in lively food and drink. Paper lanterns embellished with the Japanese and Chilean flags and the phrase “Welcome Minister of Chile” illuminated the park. Kiosks sold a variety of foods, teas, and drinks, served by women wearing elaborately decorated aprons reading “Nitrate of Chile.” The kiosks also distributed to the large crowd bottles of sake painted with the Chilean and Japanese flags.<sup>132</sup>

Representatives from several Japanese periodicals covered the Chileans’ trip to Nagano. The voluminous collection of documents that Irarrázaval compiled and transmitted to Santiago to

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<sup>129</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 14. “Discurso pronunciado por el Sr. Ministro de Chile en el Japón, Don Alfredo Irarrázaval, en la Gran Asamblea de Industriales y Comerciantes verificada en Nagano el día 2 de noviembre de 1912.” Pg. 1 (anexos begin on 3425).

<sup>130</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 15-19.

<sup>131</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 19-20.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

summarize his travels include many translated publications from *The Mainichi Shimbun* (*Japan Daily News*)—a major Japanese daily. Numerous articles corroborate Irarrázaval’s accounts of the trip and offer almost unanimously positive endorsements of the Chileans. One article praised Irarrázaval’s speeches as “transcendental,” and overall seemingly endorsed the aspiration to culturally and economically tighten relations with Chile.<sup>133</sup>

The Japanese press pool also recorded their personal conversations with the Chilean visitors. For instance, one reporter wrote that while signaling interest “may have been nothing more than an act of diplomacy,” the Chileans authentically “seemed very delighted” at the spectacles of the Nagano festivities and particularly of the geisha dancers. The reporters, through an interpreter, asked Irarrázaval’s impression of the dancers. He responded, saying “*choto*” (Japanese for “wait a second”) and then gestured to Ruiz (Secretary for the Chilean Legation) and commented “if you want to get an opinion on the nice girls of Nagano, you better ask Mr. Ruiz.” Ruiz laughed and replied, “I do not have an opinion on the nice girls of Nagano in general, just one in particular.” It is not clear if the Chileans realized that these potentially delicate moments of likely alcohol-fueled male sociability would appear for public consumption in the following day’s *Mainichi Shimbun*.<sup>134</sup>

The Chilean traveling party boarded a train and departed Nagano shortly after noon and returned to Tokyo the following day, November 4. In correspondence with Chile’s foreign minister, Irarrázaval stated that the trip to Nagano exposed the deepening demand for commerce and relations with Chile that existed throughout Japan. Moreover, Irarrázaval saw this significant advancement in Chilean-Japanese relations locally as the product of efforts in diplomacy, marketing, and commerce conducted by successive generations of Chilean diplomat-businessmen, members of the Nitrate Delegation, and committed Japanese officials. In other words, the Chileans’ visit to Nagano strengthened their assumption that a growing logistical infrastructure for diplomacy and commerce both fostered and relied upon relations at the local and individual levels that would converge to enable the two sides to actualize their visions for Pacific commerce.<sup>135</sup>

#### *The Lautaro’s Journey to Japan*

In 1917, the Chilean state founded the Transport Section of the Armada. This department assigned decommissioned naval ships to carry nitrate abroad in exchange for coal, cotton, sugar, and other mechanical and food supplies demanded in Chile. The idea was that repurposing aging, dormant naval ships could bolster Chile’s otherwise limited commercial maritime infrastructure and act as instructional missions for cadets. Most notably, the program assigned the Chilean frigate—the *Lautaro*—to journey to Japan via Honolulu in April of 1919. The first ever

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<sup>133</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912. See anexos to this document under the translated article entitled “La Gran Reunión Industrial” (del *Shinano Mainichi Shimbun*, November 3, 1912), Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>134</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, See anexos to this document under the translated article entitled “El Ministro de Chile en Fukiro,” Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>135</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 370, November 13, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 22.

commercial trip to Japan undertaken directly by the Chilean state, the *Lautaro* spent an extensive and unexpected 236 days in transit and traversed over 28,000 miles in the Pacific during which it spent nearly eight months at sea. Having already delivered nitrate to Australia, Mexico, Peru, the Armada's transport division charged the *Lautaro* in 1919 with the theoretically straightforward task of transporting 2,750 tons of nitrate to Japan (the ship's maximum cargo capacity) and returning with Japanese machine guns, explosives, and gunpowder purchased for the Chilean military. The navy's Transport Section evidently failed to substantially expand Chilean commerce and the state disbanded the department in 1921 not long after the *Lautaro* returned from Japan. Yet, the *Lautaro*'s journey unleashed a complicated series of local and individual interactions that shed light on the nature of the Pacific vision at sea.<sup>136</sup>

The best account of the *Lautaro*'s experiences appears in a memoir of the journey published in 1938 by the ship's captain and distinguished naval Commander, Alejo Marfan Montel. Part professional autobiography, part travel memoir, part nautical manual, part tirade against what he saw as Chilean society's abandonment of maritime knowledge and naval life in the day of aviation, Marfan's *Journey to Japan by the Frigate "Lautaro"* offers a blow-by-blow account of the ship's tumultuous passage to carry nitrate across the Pacific.<sup>137</sup>

Marfan's memoir of the *Lautaro*'s journey to Japan offers rare insights into the challenges of maritime life in the Chile-Japan passage with which ships of all sizes and nationalities contended in the early twentieth century. For example, due its combustibility, transporting nitrate was a potentially dangerous business that required knowledge and experience. Workers carefully loaded bagged nitrate into a ship's hull in square pyramids. Ports and ships were then required to maintain reserves of a mixture of fresh water and nitrate caliche (which workers referred to "mother water" or "old water") to extinguish any fires, aware that saltwater acted as an accelerant for nitrate fires. Along with fire precautions, preventing nitrate from seeping out of its bagging and spoiling in humid maritime air presented a constant headache. The Pacific also menaced mariners with torrential rains, typhoons, and unpredictable variations in temperature; and violent changes in weather routinely trapped vessels at sea for extended periods. Regardless of nationality, life on board the often old and confined ships that carried nitrate to Japan entailed risk, danger, excitement, boredom, and patience.<sup>138</sup>

Moreover, a unique blend of Chilean nationalism and trans-Pacific connections defined life onboard the *Lautaro*. For example, Marfan understood his orders to transport nitrate to Japan as a service to the nation and declared the *Lautaro* to embody the crew's otherwise "absent fatherland." Marfan recalled after first setting sail for Japan: "Though our view of our fatherland's territory disappeared, we continued living in her. Among the iron and wood that forms the hull of the 'Lautaro'... we felt as if we were a living bit of our detached dear soil. And the crew in these moments were like a genuine picture of our country that beyond was working towards its destiny." Marfan further described how "being Chile a country of few resources and

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<sup>136</sup> Alejo Marfan, *Viaje al Japón de la fragata "Lautaro"* (Santiago, Chile: Jeneral Díaz, 1938), 11-18. Accessed at Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.

<sup>137</sup> Marfan, *Viaje al Japón de la fragata "Lautaro,"* 116.

<sup>138</sup> Marfan, *Viaje al Japón de la fragata "Lautaro,"* 20, 124, 142.

lacking a merchant marine, it was obligated to use auxiliary and war ships on commercial trips to export nitrate and bring in return certain goods that we lack and would eventually have to import anyways.” But, ironically, the defection of Chilean mariners in Japan during the return voyage forced Marfan to recruit many Japanese sailors (as well as others of different Pacific nationalities), to safely sail the *Lautaro* home. “Despite belonging to different races, we fraternized as if we were from one nation,” Marfan recalled. Fittingly, extending the Chilean-Japanese nitrate chain thus relied upon collaboration between Chilean and Japanese mariners at sea.<sup>139</sup>

### **Competition and Confronting International Challenges**

Despite many setbacks, by the 1920s Chilean and Japanese diplomat-businessmen saw their efforts culminate in seeming successes. Nitrate exports for Japan in 1918 totaled 48,517 tons, 1919 reached 65,184 tons, and 1920 even surpassed a record 121,000 tons.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, Japan’s distance from combat during the First World War, abundance of labor, wealth in raw materials, and investment in manufacturing, resulted, in the words of one Chilean, in a situation where “the whole world searches in Japan for goods that Europe and the United States have not been able to provide” on account of the war.<sup>141</sup>

Chileans, once more, saw the acceleration of Japanese industry as their own opportunity. Indeed, Chilean nitrate, in addition to its utility as fertilizer, could act as one of the raw materials required by Japanese industries to produce food and manufactured goods now fetching high demand on the world stage.<sup>142</sup> Japanese exports to Chile (mostly copper wire, and some silk, cotton, and food products) also increased by the 1920s.<sup>143</sup>

Yet, Chilean diplomat-businessmen faced a new host of challenges with which to contend in the 1920s. Centrally, Chilean nitrate faced an escalating and formidable competition, led by Japanese production and foreign imports of ammonium sulphate. Nitrate’s gaining momentum encouraged a Japanese government cautious of overreliance on foreign commodities to direct its manufacturers established in other industries to commence ammonium sulfate production for domestic consumption and even exportation.<sup>144</sup> Japanese production of ammonium sulphate spiked from barely 73,000 tons in 1910 to 110,000 tons by 1920. Though still falling well short of Japan’s total domestic demands exceeding 300,000 tons of nitrogenous materials in the early 1920s, a combination of Japanese firms expanded their production and opened new plants in the

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<sup>139</sup> Marfan, *Viaje al Japón de la fragata “Lautaro,”* 23, 129, 148.

<sup>140</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 14.A, March 22, 1918, Fondo RREE, Volume 2144, ARNAD.

<sup>141</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 43.A, August 14, 1918, Fondo RREE, Volume 2144, ARNAD.

<sup>142</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 43.A, August 14, 1918, Fondo RREE, Volume 2144, ARNAD.

<sup>143</sup> P.V. de Cuoto, “Relatorio presentado por el Consul Honorario de Chile en Kobe,” to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, September 11, 1922, Fondo RREE, Volume 2331, ARNAD. And Arturo Rose-Innes, “Artículos exportados a Chile del puerto de Yokohama en el año 1925” to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, April 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2530, ARNAD.

<sup>144</sup> Japanese firms exported approximately 14,000 tons of ammonium sulphate in 1919 and looked with enthusiasm towards increasing exports in the future.

Japanese mainland and occupied Korea dedicated exclusively to ammonium sulphate.<sup>145</sup> A revitalized politics of economic nationalism in Japan aimed to wean the state off of its dependence on any foreign fertilizers and chemicals.

The Japanese state and firms also looked to manufacture ammonia using the Haber-Bosch Process. Discovered by German chemists Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch in the 1910s, the method extracted nitrogen from oxygen in the air to produce another form of artificial nitrogenous salt. Haber-produced synthetic nitrate came to supplant markets for Chilean nitrate particularly in the US and Europe and triggered the external crisis that brought the Chilean nitrate industry to its knees in the 1910s and 1920s.

Foreign Fertilizers Imported into Japan

Year	Chilean Nitrate (tons)	Sulfate of Ammonia (tons)	“Other” fertilizers such bones and bean cakes (tons)	Total (tons)
1911	28,233	74,242	695,375	797,850
1912	18,189	84,599	629,956	744,744
1913	26,725	111,519	888,761	1,027,005
1914	24,425	105,631	723,192	853,248
1915	30,211	19,948	800,656	850,815
1916	45,021	7,164	856,651	908,836
1917	55,086	13,099	1,084,054	1,154,239
1918	48,905	1,088	1,250,289	1,300,282
1919	65,706	101,232	1,506,333	1,673,261
Approximate total value for years 1911-1919 (Yen)	54,624,005	88,633,707	509,234,860	652,492,572

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Chileans in Japan certainly acknowledged the legitimate threat posed by competition from Japanese producers and other foreign importers. In 1911, Irarrázaval commented that “the

<sup>145</sup> These figures and brief descriptions are included in the anexo to Victor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 21.A, May 11, 1922, Fondo RREE, Volume 2341, ARNAD.

<sup>146</sup> This table is adapted and condensed copy of two tables from Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón*, 33-35.

artificial fertilizer industry in this country has achieved a striking development and is a factor that the Chilean government and nitrate producers need to constantly take into account. [These producers are] the natural competitors of Chilean nitrate.”<sup>147</sup> But they nonetheless remained optimistic about nitrate’s resiliency and mobilized to combat competition. They countered that the purity and potency of nitrogen in the Chilean product nourished crops more quickly than its three main competitors: ammonium sulphate (20% nitrogen), cyanide (18-20% nitrogen), and nitrate of calcium (13% nitrogen).<sup>148</sup> They also pointed to numerous comparative trials and experiments in which nitrate consistently outperformed ammonium sulphate in the cultivation of the critical mulberry tree.<sup>149</sup> Chilean diplomat-businessmen also reported that nitrate retained a price advantage next to ammonium sulphate and that the Chilean product provided greater utility in Japanese production of mixed fertilizers than did ammonium.<sup>150</sup> Chilean Minister to Japan in 1918, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, reported optimistically that even if “nitrate loses a bit of importance in the market, the most pressing needs of humanity will always ensure...its constant demand in agriculture and chemical industries.”<sup>151</sup>

Moreover, nitrate actors often mobilized the relationships they formed with Japanese businessmen and state representatives to dissuade them from entering artificial fertilizer production. In 1922, for example, Chileans worked to undermine ongoing negotiations between powerful Japanese firms—namely the industrial giant Sumitomo and Company—and German officials over establishing Japanese factories that would utilize the Haber method to produce synthetic nitrogen.<sup>152</sup> Chilean diplomat, Victor Vicente Robles, asserted to Santiago in 1922: “Undoubtedly, if one or two large Japanese firms...took up nitrate production in Chile, it would ensure that that Haber process would not develop in Japan.” Should Haber production proliferate, however, nitrate would find “very serious competition aggravated by shipping costs and the challenges of marketing Chilean fertilizer posed by language.”<sup>153</sup> Chilean consul in Japan, C. Alvarez de la Rivera, additionally reported in 1928 that even though the advancements in global artificial nitrate production, “marked a true scientific achievement, those efforts in reality have not been able to dislodge the place of the Chilean product that now, like always, retains a global demand.” Operating under the assumption of nitrate’s unquestioned superiority, Alvarez de la Rivera opined that Chilean nitrate only required “effective administrative

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<sup>147</sup> Alfredo Irrarrázaval to Enrique Rodríguez, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, December 14, 1911, Fondo RREE, Volume 1607, ARNAD, 6.

<sup>148</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera*, 65.

<sup>149</sup> Studies by the late 1930s evidently also demonstrated that Chilean nitrate naturally possessed small quantities of minerals critical for agricultural growth such as calcium, potassium, magnesium, and aluminum among others. Manuel Cuadros to Chilean Legation in Japan, “Memorandum,” October 19, 1939, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1844, Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>150</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 14.A, March 22, 1918, Fondo RREE, Volume 2144, ARNAD.

<sup>151</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 42.A, August 9, 1918, Fondo RREE, Volume 2144, ARNAD.

<sup>152</sup> Victor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 21.A, May 11, 1922, Fondo RREE, Volume 2341, ARNAD.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

handling” to preserve its price advantage and deliver “a coup de grâce to the artificial nitrate industry.”<sup>154</sup>

### **Pan-Pacific Internationalism**

By the 1920s, Chilean and Japanese actors promoted their vision for commerce through new institutions in the Pacific that embodied post-First World War internationalist multilateralism. The Pan-Pacific Club of Tokyo offers a particularly illuminating example. From April 1923 to May 1940, the Pan-Pacific Club held 600 meetings in the form of weekly luncheons at Tokyo’s Imperial Hotel.<sup>155</sup> Many Latin Americans and Chileans attended club functions and its membership elected Chilean diplomat Pedro Rivas Vicuña as Club president in 1927.<sup>156</sup>

At the Pan-Pacific Club’s meeting on November 20, 1925, Chilean Chargé d’Affaires in Japan, Oscar Blanco Viel, delivered an impassioned speech, spoken in moderate English, before a meeting specifically dedicated to celebrating Blanco Viel’s departure following his three years in Japan. Blanco Viel remarked that while it was not always customary to discuss commerce at Club meetings, he described how Chile’s “nitrate deposits literally aid in feeding the world” and nodded specifically to Asano Sōichirō, president of Toyo Kisen Kaisha steamship company, for helping deliver this process to Japan. Blanco Viel lauded Asano as “a sure and effective worker for the development of mutually pleasant relations between all the great nations of the Pacific.”<sup>157</sup> Blanco Viel’s speech embodied efforts of Chilean actors to utilize the terms of Pan-Pacific internationalism to advance their own Pacific vision. The very meeting place of the Pan-Pacific Club—Tokyo’s Imperial Hotel—hosted numerous Latin American diplomats across the years and was even where Chile sporadically based the operations of its Legation in Tokyo in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1920, the Japanese government invited Chilean engineer, Enrique Kaempffer, who possessed a distinguished record of research and publication on nitrate manufacturing, to conduct a number of studies on Japanese commercial and railroad industries and to lecture on Chilean commerce.<sup>158</sup> Kaempffer was already in Japan after being assigned by the Chilean government to help open Japan to nitrate, study Japan’s railroad systems, and was a key contact and accountant during the *Latuario*’s nitrate shipment in 1919-1920. Accompanied by projected images, Kaempffer lectured before the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and gave a technical presentation on nitrate extraction and production before the engineering department of the Imperial University

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<sup>154</sup> C. Alvarez de la Rivera, to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 11, March 5, 1928, Fondo RREE, Volume 2693, ARNAD. This source calculates currencies based on an exchange rate of 4 Chilean pesos to the yen.

<sup>155</sup> This document states the recent holding of the Club’s 600<sup>th</sup> meeting. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 209/115, May 28, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 3940, ARNAD.

<sup>156</sup> Pedro Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 92, September 17, 1927, Fondo RREE, Volume 2622, ARNAD. 3771

<sup>157</sup> Oscar Blanco Viel to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 57, November 23, 1925, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1028A Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>158</sup> Enrique Kaempffer, *La industria del Salitre i del Yodo, 1907-1914* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta Cervantes, 1914).

of Tokyo. Intellectual collaborations among non-state actors thus reinforced the dedication to visions of Pacific relations espoused by businessmen and diplomats.<sup>159</sup>

The international press in Japan likewise remarked upon Japanese-Latin American multilateralism. In September of 1929, the Chile Correspondent to the *Japan Advertiser* published an article entitled “The Wealth of Chile: A Pacific State Which is Attracting Foreign Capital.” The article extolled Chile’s impressive national progress and infrastructural development and the promise of its natural resources, led by nitrate, which extends “to the world the way to restore to the land, exhausted by prolonged cultivation, its former fertility.” The article elaborated that while glancing at a map may convey that Chile “was isolated from the rest of the world” the truth was the opposite. “The ocean, which forms the western frontier, and washes her coasts from north to south over a distance of more than 3,000 miles, offers facilities for communication with the rest of the world.” The article concluded that “No other country in America, with the sole exception of the United States, has such a large mercantile fleet in the Pacific as Chile...[Chile] can give very good returns to those who are willing to put into the country their work and their money.”<sup>160</sup>

*The China Mail* echoed these sentiments in 1929 and concluded that “it is quite certain that Chile is the coming country of the continent where there will be great economic developments in the near future.”<sup>161</sup> The April 16, 1929 issue of the *Chugai Shogyo Shimpo* (*The Universal Daily*) published an article entitled “The Economic Situation in Chile” which portrayed a nation supported by a robust economy, growing urban infrastructure, and steady commodity production. In particular, the article cited that the national nitrate production for 1928 of 3,200,000 tons (2,800,000 of which were exported) marked a 96% increase from 1927.<sup>162</sup> Also in April of 1929, the *Hong Kong Daily Press* reported on the promising recovery of Chilean nitrate and that Chile’s treasury in January of 1929 enjoyed a surplus exceeding 66 million pesos, thus illustrating “further evidence of Chile’s excellent financial situation.”<sup>163</sup> Despite no shortage of drawbacks and skepticism, the notion of looming and booming nitrate sales in Japan still aroused considerable interest on both sides of the Pacific by 1929. In other words, both Japanese and Latin American actors mobilized the trendy 1920s internationalist vocabulary of international peace preservation, anti-imperialism, regional integration, and free commerce.

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<sup>159</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 18.A, June 3, 1920, Fondo RREE, Volume 2250, ARNAD.

<sup>160</sup> *The Japan Advertiser*, “The Wealth of Chile: A Pacific State Which is Attracting Foreign Capital.” September 1929, Fondo RREE Volume 2782 ARNAD.

<sup>161</sup> *The China Mail*, “Chile Today: Coming Nation of South America, Great Ambitions.” No date 1929, Fondo RREE Volume 2782 ARNAD.

<sup>162</sup> *Chugai Shogyo Shimpo*, “La situación económica in Chile,” April 16, 1929, Fondo RREE, Volume 2782, ARNAD 3870. Included in anexos to Enrique Gallardo Nieto to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 99, Date Unknown, Fondo RREE, Volume 2782, ARNAD.

<sup>163</sup> *Hong Kong Daily Press*, “News from South America,” April 19, 1929, Fondo RREE, Volume 2782, ARNAD 3874. Included in anexos to Enrique Gallardo Nieto to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 24, 1929, Fondo RREE, Volume 2782, ARNAD.

## Towards New Institutions

Though the Pacific vision seemed to be coming to life during the 1920s, by the end of this decade, the initial institutional entanglements upon which actors built Chilean-Japanese relations were forced to evolve. In early 1926, the Nippon Yusen Kaisha (the Japan Mail Shipping Line), a large Japanese steamship company founded in 1885 and the shipping division for the Mitsubishi *zaibatsu*, partially merged with Toyo Kisen Kaisha—the long-time primary carrier of nitrate to Japan and a critical ligament supporting the Pacific vision. Toyo had barely returned a profit since its founding in the 1890s and struggled to compete with other steamship companies in the Pacific. Not only had Japan’s government endured dramatic losses while subsidizing Toyo, but the company’s debts surpassed 21 million yen by 1926. In the merger, Nippon Yusen purchased Toyo’s eight Pacific ships (three of which primarily traveled to San Francisco, and the other five maintained the lines to South America) while Toyo retained some of its Asian routes. Nippon Yusen also received an annual government subsidy of nearly three million yen to finance an upgrade of their fleet to top-of-the line vessels that possessed cargo space of 14,000 tons. Toyo’s current fleet could carry cargoes ranging only from 8,000-13,000 tons. Nippon Yusen executives and the Japanese state hoped that the steamship company, large enough to offer cheaper freight and continuously improve its fleet, could compete with the Canadian Pacific Line and the US-owned Admiral Oriental Line and Dollar Steamship Company, by whom, one Chilean reported, the Japanese were feeling “cornered” and therefore felt desperate “to improve Japanese navigation in the Pacific.”<sup>164</sup> By the mid 1930s, Nippon Yusen managed four ships that conducted seven total departures for Chilean ports annually.<sup>165</sup>

Nippon Yusen’s conquest of nitrate shipping also accelerated the transition towards Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha (Mitsubishi Corporation)—the trading branch of the Mitsubishi *zaibatsu*—emerging as the primary purchaser and distributing agent for nitrate in Japan by the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>166</sup> Chile’s nitrate conglomerates concluded successive contracts that isolated Mitsubishi as the exclusive importer beginning in 1931. Prior to 1931, Chile’s Association of Nitrate Producers sold freely to any Japanese US, or British firms willing to import and distribute in Japan. Japan came to form 5% of Chile’s total international commerce by the 1930s.<sup>167</sup>

Japanese firms reciprocated interest in exclusivity contracts by attempting to outbid one another with competing offers for higher guaranteed minimal nitrate import tonnage and lower commissions. On a few occasions, Japanese firms even signed individual contracts with private nitrate producers in Chile, rather than through the centralized nitrate conglomerates, in order to

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<sup>164</sup> Pedro Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 20, February 21, 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2540, ARNAD.

<sup>165</sup> Sergio Montt, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en Japón,” to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y Comercio de Chile, Oficio No. 50, May 29, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD, 17.

<sup>166</sup> Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha was also involved in importing and exporting fishmeal fertilizers and feedstock from Peru and Chile in the early twentieth century. Kristin Wintersteen, *The Fishmeal Revolution: The Industrialization of the Humboldt Current* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 42.

<sup>167</sup> Pedro Iacobelli, “Japan’s Intelligence Network in Chile During the Second World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 56, no. 1 (2021): 82.

block an exclusivity deal from proceeding with a competitor. For example, Mitsubishi followed this practice to successfully block Mitsui Shoji Kaisha (the trading division of the Mitsui *zaibatsu*) from signing a long-term exclusivity contract for Chilean nitrate in 1929. Jockeying for nitrate shipments emerged as a proxy for Mitsubishi's ambition to counter Mitsui's dominance over Japan's foreign trade. By the early 1930s, when nitrate actors formally and completely selected Mitsubishi as the exclusive importer for Chilean nitrate, Mitsui retaliated by contracting to import artificial nitrate of soda produced by the Virginia-based firm Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation.<sup>168</sup> So Mitsui—supplied with US-produced synthetic nitrate—battled with Mitsubishi—supplied with Chilean nitrate—over a Japanese fertilizer market that narrowed as the Japanese state worked to entirely manufacture their own nitrogen supplies. Thus, a new cohort of Japanese institutions (who were complicit in administrating Japan's growing empire) emerged as the competing players for nitrate imports into Japan by the late 1920s and early 1930s.

And in Chile in response to the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, in 1931 the Chilean state and several private nitrate producers replaced the Association of Nitrate Producers with a new conglomerate called the Chilean Nitrate Corporation (COSACH).<sup>169</sup> The COSACH essentially cemented a process crystalizing across the 1920s in which foreign dominance in the nitrate industry pivoted from primarily British to primarily US hands. Indeed, across the 1920s US Guggenheim-owned firms purchased the two largest British-owned nitrate firms (Anglo-Chilean Consolidated Nitrate Corporation and the Lautaro Nitrate Corporation) and gradually installed a pioneering Guggenheim production method in their *oficinas*.<sup>170</sup> Under the stewardship of the Guggenheims and the Chilean state, the new conglomerate hoped to revive depressed sales after 1929, regulate production, control prices, and negotiate cartelization with foreign competition.<sup>171</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter has detailed how from the 1890s to the late 1920s, Chilean diplomat-businessmen in Japan, working alongside a variety of Japanese businessmen and state actors, worked to overcome geographic distance, language and cultural unfamiliarity, and contradictory state policy to build a mutually profitable and sophisticated infrastructure for Chilean nitrate

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<sup>168</sup> L.W. Richardson to Fernando Mardones, No. 41, February 17, 1937, Fondo Salitre, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 182, ANH.

<sup>169</sup> See Donald McConnell, "The Chilean Nitrate Industry," *Journal of Political Economy* 3 no.4 (August 1935): 506-529. Elisabeth Glaser Schmidt, "The Guggenheims and the Coming of the Great Depression in Chile, 1923-1934," *Business and Economic History* 24 no. 1 (Fall 1995): 176-185. Pablo Muñoz Acosta, "Para una historia del salitre en el siglo XX, 1924-1954," *Mapocho Revista de Humanidades* 76 (2014): 155-196.

<sup>170</sup> Fernando Gorroño, Roberto Fiedler, Alfonso de Castro, Fernando Canessa, Fernando Mardones, eds., *Estudios sobre la industria salitrera de Chile: Informe del Instituto de Ingenieros*, eds. (Santiago: Editorial Universitario, 1955), Volume 72, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, ANH, 398.

<sup>171</sup> The disparate national nitrogen industries held conferences throughout the 1920s to reach cartel agreements, define the parameters of marketing, and review the foremost knowledge on agricultural fertilizers. "Conferencia celebrada el 7 de septiembre de 1929 and Baden-Baden, en el hotel Stefanie, con el objeto de hacer arreglo con relación a la tercera Conferencia Internacional del Azoe," No. 1250 (Directorio), October 23, 1929, Fondo Salitre, Fondo Asociación de Productores de Salitre, Volume 103, ANH

consumption in Japan by the 1920s. Actors on both sides perceived of shared compatibilities in coastal geography, commerce, industry, agriculture, and timing that linked their nations. They sincerely trusted if they could meet the demands for establishing commerce and overcome at least some of the logistical obstacles that restricted Chilean-Japanese trade to that point, the two nations and their firms could find in each other a steady and massively profitable partnership. For these actors, the Pacific vision sincerely offered a world of opportunity and profit restricted only by the limits of logistics and imagination.

Chile-Japan relations in this period tell a story about what *could* have been. In many contexts, the Chilean state remained passive while their diplomat-businessmen called for larger investment in Japan's massive untapped markets. Reflecting on the 1910s and 1920s, one British businessman affiliated with nitrate interests in Japan commented years later in 1937 that "Without doubt, one of the main causes of Chile's failure to obtain an adequate participation in the consumption of nitrogen [in Japan]...is that no consistent policy had been followed in regards to distribution." He concluded that, should the Chilean state follow the guidance and policy recommendations of its growing body of representatives stationed in Japan and if "the Japanese government is willing to guarantee the unrestricted right of importation over a period of years, the remedy for past mistakes is in Chile's hands."<sup>172</sup>

But I should be clear that it was not all Chileans all the time in the early twentieth-century who advocated for a Pacific pivot for Chile's economy and nation-building. The actors to whom I refer as Pacific visionaries were primarily various generations of diplomat-businessmen stationed in Japan to expand nitrate commerce there and nationalist intellectuals who resented Chile's intractable subservience to North Atlantic imperialism and saw Japan as a model for shedding that subservience. Though coming from across the political spectrum, these Chileans and their Pacific vision clashed with others at home. In addition to racial prejudices towards Asians, opposition to the Pacific vision stemmed primarily from North Atlantic capital in Chile and other Chilean elites would not or could not oppose that foreign influence. Indeed, various generations of British and US investors in the industry attempted to impede nitrate commerce in Japan because it could compete with their own established networks in Europe and with European shippers. Chilean elites complicit in the domineering presence of North Atlantic firms in Chile ultimately sided with North Atlantic capital rather than pursue the Pacific vision. Pacific visionaries were a vocal and diverse cohort of nationalist elites, but did not represent all Chileans all the time.

In other words, the project for nitrate sales in Japan unfolded as a lumpy effort overseen by related but geographically and often politically separated actors who not only struggled to coordinate policy when earnestly hoping to do so, but sometimes acted from altogether competing interests. The Chilean state inhabited the center of this complicated situation and whose own messy set of national interests informed officials' contradictory responses towards the prospect of commerce in Japan. Evaluating the complicated and contrary impulses

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<sup>172</sup> L.W. Richardson to Fernando Mardones, No. 41, February 17, 1937, Fondo Salitre, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 182, ANH.

determining Chile's appetite for commitments in Japan, and how this unfolded within debates over Chile's economic sovereignty, the national racial stock, and competing plans for Chile's future, forms the topic of the next chapter.

## Chapter 2 Chile, Japan, and the Political Economy of Post-Colonial Nation-Building, 1890s-1940s

### Introduction

Forecasts that Japanese nitrate fertilizer consumption would rescue Chile's fading primary industry (the project I describe as the Pacific vision) implied a somewhat radical shift in Chile's political economic networks away from their traditional orientation towards and dependence on Europe and the Atlantic. Successive generations of Chilean Pacific visionaries (a diverse cohort of Chilean diplomats and nitrate businessmen in Japan) asserted that pivoting to Japanese instead of European nitrate markets and investors might enable Chile to wrest control over the national industry away from the predominantly foreign actors to whom many believed that the Chilean oligarchy had ransomed Chile's finances and future. Having dominated much Chilean property and resource extraction since independence in 1810, European investors and their Chilean elite collaborators (who were uninterested or unwilling to antagonize foreign capital) often responded with apathy or hostility to the calls for a Japanese turn for the nitrate industry. So, when Chile's Minister to Japan, Alfredo Irrarrázaval, clashed with Chile's foreign nitrate producers in 1912 over a plan to entice Japanese nitrate fertilizer production in Chile and expressed the hope that "the nationalist spirit takes root in Chile and produces in our country the miracles that others have realized, especially Japan," he was self-consciously fighting a battle over Chile's economic sovereignty.<sup>173</sup>

Simultaneously, the seemingly dizzying success of Japan's economic performance and defense of its self-determination, underway since the Meiji Restoration reintroduced Japan to foreign engagements in 1868, struck many Chilean diplomats as the key to the riddle of nation-building in a North Atlantic-dominated world. In their extensive correspondence, speeches, reports, and published works, Chilean Pacific visionaries made the case that extending economic ties with Japan could enable Chile to assimilate similar mechanisms of development. In particular, they admired the uncompromising economic nationalism with which Japan recently dismantled the very same economic imperialism that still dominated Chile's nitrate industry. These nationalist actors identified Japanese commitments to the national collective, domestic industrialization, and defiance of the western imperial world order as applicable remedies for Chile's own economic breakdown, fractious politics, stunted development, and lingering dependence on foreign capital.

Numerous Chilean Pacific visionaries articulated these precise sentiments over several decades: Chilean Minister to Japan in 1919, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, asserted that "Japan, which has earned a place among the world's great powers; Japan, which develops its military and naval capacity; Japan, which increases its wealth...Japan, which follows a well-planned program of industrial and commercial progress; Japan, which is rich, strong, and respected illustrates the measures that our country can implement."<sup>174</sup> In 1921, Chilean Minister Víctor Vicente Robles insisted that Japan's methods of national administration "be studied for our own experience and use; whether it be commerce, politics, the army and navy, in ongoing social questions, or in how

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<sup>173</sup> Alfredo Irrarrázaval to Ministro de Chile en Londres (forwarded to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile), Oficio No. 283, August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, Archivo Nacional de la Administración (hereafter ARNAD), 16.

<sup>174</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 5D Confidencial, January 25, 1919, Fondo Histórico, Volume 760. Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile (hereafter RREE Archive).

economic problems unfold.”<sup>175</sup> In 1935, senior Foreign Ministry official, Miguel Cruchaga, urged Chile to “closely follow Japan’s grand industrial evolution to take advantage of the possibilities it entails for our commerce in that country and for our exports to the Orient.”<sup>176</sup> In 1941, Chilean Minister Armando Labra Carvajal outlined how Japanese heavy machinery imports (exchanged through barter for nitrate) were “the Japanese instruments of true progress with which we will forge in America our own industrial grandeur and construct the foundation of our national economy.”<sup>177</sup> I thus argue that Chileans’ project to convert Japan into a principal fertilizer market was not only a matter of commerce, but also morphed into an intention to follow the Japanese blueprint for prosperity and development. Chileans saw themselves as uniquely capable of replicating Japan’s model because of their geographic and political economic compatibilities with Japan.

Chile’s Pacific vision comprised just one of many new world building projects underway across the early twentieth-century world.<sup>178</sup> The era’s many revolutions, wars, global economic collapses, and regional disintegration thrust the North Atlantic’s imperial dominance into an existential crisis that engendered serious counterfactual possibilities. As post-colonial nation-builders across the globe pondered how to balance investment-needy development projects, economic sovereignty, and participation in international affairs, they imagined myriad international orders in which western states and empires would *no longer* predominate.<sup>179</sup> Historian Adom Getachew’s work on post-1945 “anti-colonial worldmaking” among Black anglophone and Pan-African intellectuals, for example, considers how actors linked domestic development to the overturning of empire in the international sphere.<sup>180</sup>

It was precisely in this context of emerging postcolonial visions for rebalancing the world and fading Anglo-American influence over international politics that Japan’s template for speedily achieving stability at home while fortifying its sovereignty captured the imagination of

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<sup>175</sup> Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 35D Confidencial, October 20, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893, RREE Archive.

<sup>176</sup> Miguel Cruchaga to Señor Encargado de Negocios de Chile en Japón, Oficio No. 1, February 4, 1935, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1472, RREE Archive).

<sup>177</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1940,” 1941, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1939, RREE Archive, 9.

<sup>178</sup> Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921–1931* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965). Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Edgar Dosman, *The Life and Times of Raúl Prebisch, 1901-1986* (London: Queens McGill University Press, 2008), Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2015). Adom Getachew, *World-Making After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019). Kaysha Corinealdi, *Panama in Black: Afro-Caribbean World-Making in the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022). Patrick Cohrs, *The New Atlantic Order: The Transformation of International Politics 1860-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022). Matthew Shutzer, “Oil, Money and Decolonization in South Asia” *Past and Present* 258 no. 1 (2023): 212-245. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Post-Imperial Possibilities: Eurasia, Eurafica, Afroasia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

<sup>179</sup> Imperial actors likewise read the moment and endeavored to refashion international order according to their own agendas. For instance, historian Brendan Simms finds the core motivation of Nazi foreign policy in the ambition to combat Anglo-American dominance in foreign relations from which Germans felt they had been excluded. See Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008). Brendan Simms, *Hitler: A Global Biography* (New York: Basic Books, 2019). Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War, America and the Remaking of the Global Order, 1916-1931* (New York: Penguin, 2014).

<sup>180</sup> Adom Getachew, *World-Making After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

global observers.<sup>181</sup> Post-colonial nation-builders across the Americas, Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa concluded that Japan's spring into modernity and international leadership was worthy of emulation.<sup>182</sup> Simultaneously, rising fascist actors in Germany, Italy, and Japan, while themselves violently imperialist but nevertheless adopting an identity of victimization and ostracization from global affairs by the North Atlantic, found common cause in their challenge to liberal internationalism.<sup>183</sup> Other elites in the globe's imperial centers, such as in London, echoed many of their current and former colonial subjects by the 1890s and thereafter in pointing to Japanese methods of national administration as the potential solutions to their social and economic defects.<sup>184</sup> In the US, influential journalist and Latin American expert, Carleton Beals, asserted in 1938 that "Many Latin Americans see in Japan a happy model to be imitated. That semi-feudal and once politically powerless, though highly cultured, nation has shown that in a few short years the techniques and cunning of European powers can be mastered and full independence from the aggressive West be achieved. Many Latin Americans feel that eventually they can do the same."<sup>185</sup> For post-colonial and imperial actors alike, Japan offered a compelling example of just what could be accomplished in modern nationhood.

As they likewise attempted to reverse the hierarchies of US and European domination in the early twentieth century, Latin American nation-builders debated state economic intervention, export-led growth, domestic industrialization, and class politics.<sup>186</sup> In Chile, this battle was fought by foreign capital, revolutionary leftists, the conservative oligarchy, and an emerging middle-class dedicated to liberal reform.<sup>187</sup> Anxiously watching political and class tensions

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<sup>181</sup> Marius B. Jansen, ed., *Changing Japanese Attitudes Towards Modernization* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965). Edmund Skrzypczak ed., *Japan's Modern Century* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1968). Ian Inkster, *Japan as a Developmental Model? Relative Backwardness and Technological Transfer* (Bochum: Studienverlag, 1980).

<sup>182</sup> See Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth-Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2022). David Malitz, *Japanese-Siamese Relations from the Meiji Restoration to the End of World War II: Relations and Representations* (Bochum: Projektverlag, 2016). David Malitz, "What Is Good about the Japanese System of Governance?: The Reception of Imperial Japanese Parliamentarism in Siamese/Thai Political Thought (1880s–1940s)," *The International History Review* 45 no. 1 (2023): 48-62.

<sup>183</sup> Reto Hoffman, "Imperial Links: The Italian-Ethiopian War and Japanese New Order Thinking, 1935-6," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50 no. 2 (2015): 215-233. Hoffman brings to light that Japanese officials struggled to reconcile a denunciation of Italian imperialism in Africa in 1935 as yet one more egregious example of western or white imperialism against the subjugated world, with an acknowledgement that Japan and Italy were geopolitically aligned against the North Atlantic.

<sup>184</sup> Sheldon Garon, "Transnational History and Japan's 'Comparative Advantage,'" *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 65-92. Garon cites, *The Great Japan: A Study in National Efficiency* (1906), by British journalist Alfred Stead who called on British society to reproduce Japan's unwavering dedication to the national collective.

<sup>185</sup> Carleton Beals, *The Coming Struggle for Latin America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1938), 39.

<sup>186</sup> For literature on economic development and international relations in Latin America, see Amy Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy: The Rise and Fall of Welfare and Development States in the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), Christy Thornton, *Revolution in Development: Mexico and the Governance of the Global Economy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), Margarita Fajardo, *The World that Latin America Created: The United Nations Economic Mission for Latin America in the Development Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022).

<sup>187</sup> On political and class conflict in Chile in the early twentieth century, see Peter Winn, *Weavers of Revolution: The Yarur Workers and Chile's Road to Socialism* (Oxford University Press, 1989). Thomas Klubock, *Contested Communities: Class, Gender, and Politics in Chile's El Teniente Copper Mine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). Sandra Deutsch, *Las Derechas: The Extreme Right in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, 1890-1939* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). Patrick Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile: Cultural Politics, Nationalism, and the Rise of the Middle Class* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in*

snowball into civil violence, some elites came to blame Chile's troubles on the exploitation of Chilean resources and labor by the oligarchy and foreign interests. Such nationalist elites argued that prosperity and stability could be restored if only Chileans retrieved command over their own political economy, though without forcing elites to surrender their own wealth and status.<sup>188</sup> I argue that the Pacific vision served as a conduit for this elite nationalist perspective. Knowing that the well-being of the nitrate industry essentially determined the national well-being, Chilean Pacific visionaries believed that hitching the nitrate industry to Japan could reverse their instability and poverty at home while also potentially recasting the power dynamics of international relations in Latin America.

### Nitrate and Chile

To convey why Japan's markets and formula for development so appealed to Chilean Pacific visionaries, I begin with a review of the centrality of nitrate to Chile's economy and an explanation of the corner into which the Chilean state and nitrate industry had backed itself. Though Chilean nitrate, in theory, formed a single industry united in aspirations and operations, in reality a number of national interests divided the industry. Foreign capital (mostly British, German, and US firms) dominated the industry, and acquired the majority of nitrate lands and production plants (known as *salitreras* or *oficinas*) across the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Thereafter, the Chilean state essentially exchanged the forfeit of nitrate territories and production to foreign-owned firms for a tax levied on every ton exported.<sup>189</sup> From about 1880, when Chile seized control of substantial stretches of nitrate-rich territory from Peru during the War of the Pacific and began taxing nitrate exports, to the mid-1920s, producers extracted and exported an estimated 66 million metric tons of nitrate.<sup>190</sup> Historian Juan Ricardo Nazer Ahumada estimates that this exploding industry accounted for nearly 80% of Chilean exports in 1910 (an increase from 57% in 1890) and provided approximately 75-80% of Chilean state revenues by the early 1900s. A report from the industry itself in 1925 estimated that on average between 1880 and

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*Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950-1973* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). Angela Vergara, *Copper Workers, International Business, and Domestic Politics in Cold War Chile* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). Jody Pavilack, *Mining for the Nation: The Politics of Chile's Coal Communities from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011). Raymond Craib, *The Cry of the Renegade: Politics and Poetry in Interwar Chile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Camilo Trumper, *Ephemeral Histories: Public Art, Politics, and the Struggle for the Streets in Chile* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

<sup>188</sup> Some examples include *La conquista de Chile en el siglo XX* by Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun (1909), *Sinceridad: Chile íntimo en 1910* by Alejandro Venegas (1910), and *Nuestra inferioridad económica: Sus causas, sus consecuencias* by Francisco Antonio Ancina (1911), Carlos Keller Rueff, *La eterna crisis Chilena* (1931). For further analysis, see Chapter 1 of Patrick Barr-Melej, *Reforming Chile*.

<sup>189</sup> Nitrate provided two fundamental revenue streams for the Chilean state. The first was directly through export taxes and the second was through the import duties on foreign commodities purchased with the foreign currencies earned from taxing nitrate. Three currencies were used in the nitrate industry: pounds sterling (in which imports of foreign fuels and materials were paid as well as most of the stocks and dividends of foreign-owned nitrate companies), the Chilean 18d gold standard (in which the nitrate export tariff and *oficina* railway expenses were paid), and, finally, the Chilean peso in which worker salaries were paid and in which a few of the Chilean-owned *oficinas* held their stocks and dividends. See Alejandro Bertrand, *The Chilean Nitrate Industry: Technology and Economics* (Paris: Imprimerie Vaugirard, 1920), Volume 5, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, Fondo Salitre, Archivo Nacional Histórico (hereafter ANH), 81.

<sup>190</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera* (Santiago, Chile: Sociedad Imprenta y Litiografía Universo, 1925), Accessed at Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 7, 13, 61, 87-94.

1925, 41.65% of the national treasury derived from taxing nitrate exports.<sup>191</sup> Though nitrate commerce elevated Chile's GDP by over 5% annually between the 1880s and the 1910s, Chile retained only an estimated third of the industry's total profits.<sup>192</sup>

To effectively organize global markets, manage marketing and prices, and prevent overproduction, Chilean president José Manuel Balmaceda (1886-1891) directed Chile's private foreign producers to loosely affiliate under what by 1894 became a parastatal, centralized body called the Nitrate Propaganda Association (Asociación Salitrera de Propaganda). Provided some funds by the Chilean state, the Chilean Nitrate Committee (originally founded as the Permanent Nitrate Committee in 1889) headquartered the Propaganda Association from London and Valparaíso. The Committee contained essentially only British and German actors and welcomed little Chilean input.<sup>193</sup>

The Nitrate Propaganda Association operated until 1913 and the outbreak of the First World War, after which nitrate producers organized anew under the Association of Nitrate Producers (1919-1930). Expanding its administrative responsibilities beyond marketing, the new body aimed to control prices, regulate production, and spread profits more evenly among producers in order to confront an emboldened competition abroad. Composed of British and German merchant houses and some Chilean businessmen, the new Producers Association promised the Chilean state steadier export revenues. Though headquartered in Valparaíso and intended to grant more agency to the Chilean state, investors in London and Berlin retained their predominant influence over the industry.<sup>194</sup> Even the subsequent Chilean Nitrate Corporation—formed in 1931 to yet further insert the Chilean state in the industry—merely transferred foreign dominance in Chile's nitrate sector from British to US influence once Guggenheim firms acquired the largest nitrate plants, thus leaving nitrate production overwhelmingly under the thumb of foreign firms.<sup>195</sup> These conglomerates accounted for the overwhelming majority (approximately 80%) of Chile's total nitrate output.<sup>196</sup>

The following chart reproduced from the Ministry of Finance in 1925 outlines the messy institutional organization of the parastatal industry under the Association of Nitrate Producers. Though hierarchies and responsibilities shifted each time the parastatal conglomerate was dissolved and refounded (for instance, between the the Nitrate Propanganda Association and the

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<sup>191</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera*, 7. Furthermore, Bertrand calculates that across the 1910s, the average output per *oficina* was approximately 20,000 tons annually while and the largest *oficinas* could produce between 50,000 and 100,000 tons. Alejandro Bertrand, *The Chilean Nitrate Industry: Technology and Economics* (Paris: Imprimerie Vaugirard, 1920. Volume 5, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, Fondo Salitre, ANH, 83.

<sup>192</sup> Juan Ricardo Nazer Ahumada, "Entrepreneurial Families, Inheritances and Wealth Transfers: The Edwards Family and Their Transition from Entrepreneurs to Rentiers, 1880–1914," in *Capitalists, Business and State-Building in Chile*, eds. Manuel Llorca Jaña, Rory Miller, and Diego Barría (Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 39.

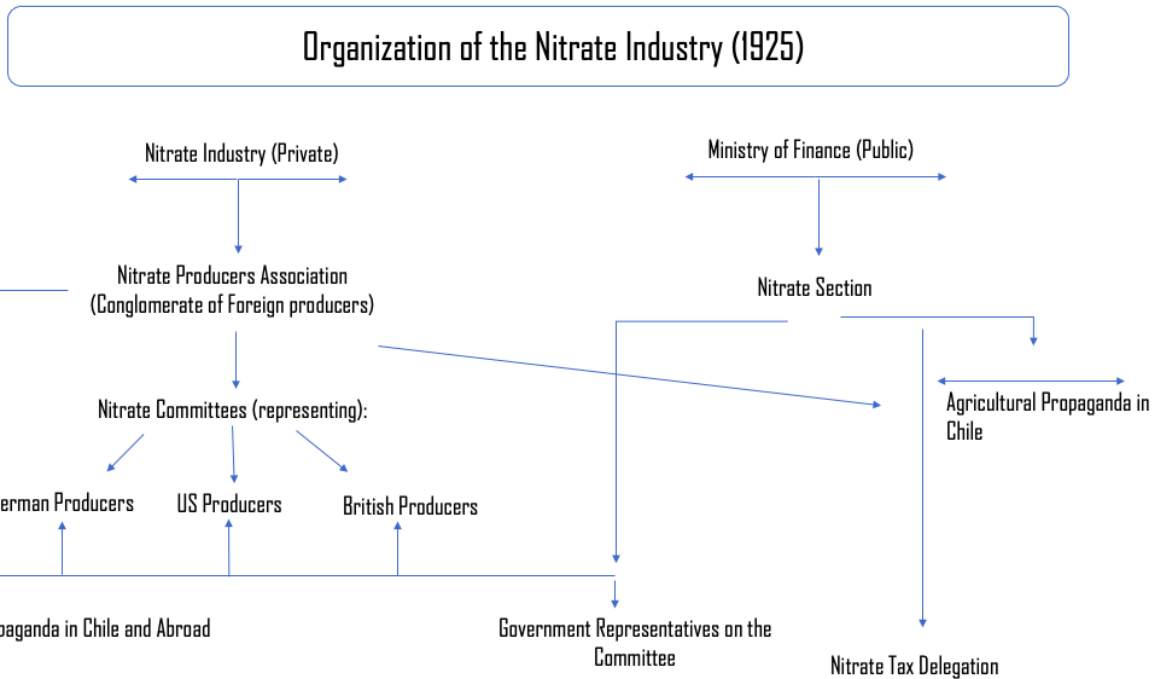
<sup>193</sup> Alfredo Irrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 330, October 23, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>194</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera*, 97-98.

<sup>195</sup> On the institutionalization of the industry in general, see Donald McConnell, "The Chilean Nitrate Industry," *Journal of Political Economy* 3 no.4 (August 1935): 506-529. Pablo Muñoz Acosta, "Para una historia del salitre en el siglo XX, 1924-1954," *Mapocho Revista de Humanidades* 76 (2014): 155-196. The Chilean state also expanded its bureaucracy (such as with the creation of the General Nitrate Directorate that worked directly under the Ministry of Finance) to better coordinate with the private conglomerates, enact and oversee reforms, and manage marketing and consumption within Chile.

<sup>196</sup> Memoria de la Legación de Chile en Londres to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 1/52, January 15, 1924, Fondo Histórico, Volume 986, RREE Archive, 17-18.

Association of Nitrate Producers), the structure below captures the general institutional dilemma of public vs. private ownership that simmered under the surface. The public side of the industry operated under the Ministry of Finance whose various branches collected the export taxes, performed administrative functions such as examining and approving budgets for the Association, and appraised conditions in the production zones. The private sector managed production, marketing, price-setting, shipping, and revenue-collection.<sup>197</sup>



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As discussed in Chapter 1, developing new markets in Japan seemed so attractive specifically because this unwieldy and institutionally messy industry confronted an existential crisis in the 1910s.<sup>199</sup> Though production boomed as the number of nitrate *oficinas* spiked from 40 in 1880 to 140 by 1912, overproduction, stockpiling, declining prices abroad, and especially competition from synthetic alternatives all converged to strip Chilean nitrate of its former monopolies over global nitrogen and fertilizer markets: Chile’s possession of the global share of nitrogen production plummeted from about 66% in 1901 to 63% in 1910 to 34.5% by 1924 to 10% by 1932 to just 3.3% by 1955 as other national suppliers of synthetic nitrogen captured

<sup>197</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera*, 8.

<sup>198</sup> This outline is copied from: Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera*, 8.

<sup>199</sup> For the crisis of the nitrate industry, see Sergio González Miranda, “Auge y crisis del nitrato Chileno: La importancia de los viajeros, empresarios, y científicos, 1830-1919,” in *Tiempo Histórico* no. 2 (2011): 159-178. Luis Andrés Iturra Valenzuela, “La frontera tarapaqueña y sus territorialidades desde la crisis salitrera hasta la década dorada (1919-1960),” in *Polis* no. 51 (2018): 1-18. Sergio González Miranda, and Diego Lizama Gavilán, “La COSACH y la crisis de la industria salitrera: un intento de estanco comercial (1927-1934),” in *Tiempo Histórico* 12 no. 22 (enero 2021): 39-55.

global consumers.<sup>200</sup> Germany's synthetic nitrogen industry in particular surged.<sup>201</sup> Chile's claim of 52% of global nitrate exports to Germany's 30% in 1928 diminished to 18% to Germany's 22% by 1933.<sup>202</sup> Owing to the better mechanized production methods, lower prices, and the logistical ease of purchasing European-produced synthetic nitrogenous fertilizers, consumption in two of Chilean nitrate's principal markets—Germany and France—plunged in the 1920s to approximately 2-3% and 68%, respectively, of their pre-1914 quantities. US consumers (another critical market) doubled their consumption of Chilean nitrate during the First World War (primarily for munitions production) but US production of synthetic ammonia and even synthetic nitrate fertilizer soon displaced Chilean nitrate there.<sup>203</sup>

Chilean representatives and the affiliated European nitrate producers blamed each other for the industry's failure to anticipate and overcome from these challenges. For example, the private investors and producers alleged that the state's unfairly steep export tax prevented a reduction in nitrate selling prices—perhaps the one tool at their disposal to preserve frugal consumers lured by cheaper synthetic alternatives.<sup>204</sup> The state, in turn, accused the producers of solely profiting at Chile's expense while neglecting to invest in modifications which any industry required to withstand adversity over time.<sup>205</sup> One producers' report published in 1925 added that “it is not true that nitrate profits primarily go abroad. To the contrary, they contribute, in the majority, to [Chilean] national economic life and to the working classes, not only in the north but throughout the rest of the Republic.” The report claimed that 50-55% of the producers' dividends remained in Chile and accompanied the industry's annual expenses in Chile which approximated 450-500 million pesos, all of which was “helping [Chile's] economic advance.”<sup>206</sup> In 1927, Ministry of Finance officials doled out shared blame to both the state for “carelessness” and negligence, and to the producers for their “individualism” and selfish prioritization of immediate profits over investments in the industry's the long-term health.<sup>207</sup> Because “discord was established when what should have reigned was only the most intense harmony,” any efforts to resolve the industry's crisis remained impossible “without the sincere cooperation of the government and the producers.”<sup>208</sup> So, though theoretically partners and not always in conflict

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<sup>200</sup> The primary competition for nitrate was production of synthetic ammonium sulphate, synthetic nitrate, nitrate of calcium, and cyanide. Ministerio de Hacienda, Sección Salitre, *Antecedentes Sobre la Industria Salitrera*, 7, 13, 61.

<sup>201</sup> Elisabeth Glaser Schmidt, “The Guggenheims and the Coming of the Great Depression in Chile, 1923-1934,” *Business and Economic History* 24 no. 1 (Fall 1995): 176-185.

<sup>202</sup> The figures for 1901, 1910, 1932, and 1955 come from: *Estudios sobre la industria salitrera de Chile: Informe del Instituto de Ingenieros*, eds. Fernando Gorroño, Roberto Fiedler, Alfonso de Castro, Fernando Canessa, Fernando Mardones (Santiago: Editorial Universitario, 1955), Volume 72, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, ANH, 421-422.

<sup>203</sup> Comisión Informante Nombrada por el Supremo Gobierno en Mayo de 1925. *El impuesto sobre la exportación del salitre*, 9-10.

<sup>204</sup> The producers would not succeed in lifting the export duty until 1931 when the Chilean state removed the export duty altogether in exchange for direct dividends.

<sup>205</sup> Asociación de Productores del Salitre, *Antecedentes y Actas de las Sesiones de la Comisión del Salitre* (1925), Volume 6, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, Fondo Salitre, ANH, 40.

<sup>206</sup> Asociación de Productores del Salitre, *Antecedentes y Actas de las Sesiones de la Comisión del Salitre* (1925), Volume 6, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, Fondo Salitre, ANH

<sup>207</sup> In 1927, the state founded the Superintendency of Nitrate and Iodine whose council (composed of both state and private representatives) was tasked to arbitrate these disputes and resolve the current dearth of knowledge of the industry as a whole and its operations in that would be required in order enact viable policy changes.

<sup>208</sup> Ministerio de Hacienda Republica de Chile, *Superintendencia de Salitre y Minas: Ley 4144 de 25 de julio de 1927, Ley 1494 de 23 de septiembre de 1927* (Valparaíso: Casa Makenzie, 1928), Volume 55, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, Fondo Salitre, ANH, pg. 5-7.

(indeed, some government elites profited handsomely from the industry's arrangements) the structure of the industry essentially primed the Chilean state and the private producers to clash over who shouldered the burden to fix the industry's problems and who enjoyed the right to profit from Chilean natural resources.

This nitrate crisis played out between two political eras in Chilean history: the Parliamentary Republic (1890s-1925) and the disintegration of the subsequent era of Popular Front coalition governments from the 1920-1940s. In 1891, elite parliamentarians emerged victorious in a bloody civil war that ended the established post-independence practice of sacrificing authentic democracy for political stability, as alternating cohorts of elites essentially selected presidential successors in fraudulent elections. Factional tension over this system erupted into civil war in which conservative oligarchic parliamentarians, defended by the rebellious Chilean navy, defeated the liberal republicans who were aligned with the Chilean army. Under the subsequent parliamentary system, power remained primarily under the legislative branch populated by the traditional oligarchy and foreign investors retained their dominance over resource extraction.

By the 1910s, the struggles of the nitrate industry triggered political changes that challenged the dominant hold of the oligarchy (and by association, foreign capital) over Chile's land and resource ownership. An emerging multi-class generation of urban liberals called for structural reform and republican presidential politics. They achieved this end (more in theory than practice, however,) with President Arturo Alessandri's enactment of a new constitution in 1925 (Alessandri was initially elected as president in 1920) that further transferred power away from the traditional elite and towards an expanded urban electorate. To stave off both the threat of leftist revolution from below and a return to conservative rule from above, this emerging liberal generation settled on coalition governments across the following decades. Under these Popular Front governments, the Chilean state negotiated compromises on labor, social spending, religious practices, and gender roles. This era of compromise collapsed by the late 1940s when President Gabriel González Videla violently repressed Chile's leftist parties and worker alliances and firmly introduced to Chile the uncompromisingly polarized politics of the global Cold War.<sup>209</sup> As historian Raymond Craib argues, "the immediate post-World War I era was one in which the social and economic tensions that had previously been held at least partially in check threatened to burst, an impression furthered by the political rise of an amorphous middle class and the political entrance of the working class."<sup>210</sup>

In short, from the 1890s to the 1920s, the Chilean state struggled to preserve civil order as disparate voices promoted divergent paths for Chile's future. Violence sporadically spilled onto Chilean streets, from Santiago, to the coal-mining south, to the nitrate north. One Chilean nitrate official put it candidly in 1928: "No one ignores the intimate relationship that exists between the march of the nitrate region and the commercial and industrial activities of the rest of the country. The interruptions in nitrate sales have created a state of crisis that slows commerce and has repercussions in every social sphere."<sup>211</sup> In a nation deeply subservient to foreign capital, suffering a crisis of confidence in its institutions and modernity, and where federal revenues

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<sup>209</sup> On Chile's Popular Front, see in particular Pavilack, *Mining for the Nation*.

<sup>210</sup> Craib, *The Cry of the Renegade*, 6.

<sup>211</sup> R. Torreblanca M., *Por las tierras del oro blanco: Estudio documentado sobre la vida, trabajos, y problemas sociales de la region del salitre* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Iris, 1928), Accessed at Biblioteca Histórica de la Armada, Valparaíso, Chile, 5.

derived from nitrate seemed to be drying up, to ask what was next for the nitrate industry *was* to ask what was next for the Chilean nation.

### **A Japanese Model for Chilean Nation-Building**

The Meiji Restoration in 1868 reintroduced Japan to global engagements; and subsequent foreign loans, investment in industrialization, and modernization of the military enabled Japan to gradually shake off its unequal neo-colonial relationships with Britain and the US. Following triumphs in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japan also began to assemble an empire of its own. Successes in industrialization and war reinforced Meiji leaders' confidence that infusing western civilization with Japanese characteristics would secure modernity for Japan. To compete in the world of US and European dominated global trade, Meiji leaders founded numerous banks which subsidized Japanese manufacturers (particularly of silk and cotton), traders, mining, education, shipbuilding, and steamship companies. Japanese officials thus adapted western practices in founding private companies to the Japanese practice of forming large vertically integrated conglomerates, known as *zaibatsu*, named after a family holding company. Numerous *zaibatsu* founded subsidiaries involved in a broad range of industries throughout Asia, Europe, and the US and maintained active ties with the Japanese state. Many of the banks, firms, and ships that came to deal in Chilean nitrate were associated with one or another *zaibatsu*.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, these firms developed robust Japanese mining and shipping industries capable of processing and transporting raw materials, such as Chilean nitrate.<sup>213</sup>

Witnesses to both Japan's well-organized rise and Chile's polarized disorder, Chilean diplomats in the 1890s and early 1900s quickly appreciated the initiative and decisiveness of Japanese national development. In 1897, the Chilean Minister to the US, Domingo Gana Cruz, described how "Japan has realized in recent years admirable internal progress" premised on reform, democracy, and liberal state institutions that established Japan as a global power.<sup>214</sup> Angel Custodio Espejo, the Chilean consul in Yokohama, commented in 1903 that Chileans were familiar with "the considerable progress achieved by this Empire. Everything associated with its commercial and socio-cultural advancement is a subject of study among Chileans."<sup>215</sup> The evening edition of Chile's *El Mercurio* on November 23, 1905 extolled Japan's impressive

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<sup>212</sup> On Japanese modernity, industrialization, and economy, see David Howell, *Capitalism from Within: Economy, Society, and the State in a Japanese Fishery* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). William Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan: Political, Economic, and Social Change Since 1850*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000). Marius Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000). Naofumi Nakamura, "The Present State of Research on 'Zaibatsu': The Case of Mitsubishi," *Social Science Japan Journal* 5, no.2 (2002): 233-242. Elise Tipton, *Modern Japan: A Social and Political history*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008). Pedro Iacobelli, Danton Leary, and Shinnosuke Takahashi, eds. *Transnational Japan as History: Empire, Migration, and Social Movements* (Handmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

<sup>213</sup> On fertilizer in Japan and trans-Pacific relations see: Paul Kreitman, "Feathers, Fertilizer, and States of Nature: Uses of Albatrosses in the US-Japan Borderlands," (PhD Diss. Princeton University, 2015). Toshihiro Higuchi, "Japan as an Organic Empire: Commercial Fertilizers, Nitrogen Supply, and Japan's Core Periphery Relationship," in *Environment and Society in the Japanese Islands* ed. Philip C. Brown and Bruce L. Batten (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015). Kristin Wintersteen, *The Fishmeal Revolution: The Industrialization of the Humboldt Current* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021). Mark Metzler, "Japan: The Arc of Industrialization" in *The New Cambridge History of Japan Volume 3*, ed. Laura Hein, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

<sup>214</sup> Domingo Gana Cruz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, February 19, 1897, Collection 247, Fondo Histórico, Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile.

<sup>215</sup> Angel Custodio Espejo to Shinbey Yagi, April 27, 1903. Appendix, Documento No. 7, in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japonés*, 318. Original citation: Archivo Nacional, Fondo Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección Consular. Correspondencia del Consulado General de Chile en Japón, China, y Filipinas, 1899-1906. Volumen 870.

“levels of progress in every sense. Its most admirable political organization has acquired in Asia and the north Pacific a preponderance that puts it at the level of the great European powers in terms of commercial and political influence.” The article implored the Chileans who looked “over our own industrial development...to attentively study the issues in Japanese development that could impact us.”<sup>216</sup>

Chileans thus envisioned themselves as particularly well-positioned to leverage a commercial relationship with Japan and their shared Pacific geography to modernize in the Japanese mold. In 1907, Chilean Consul in Yokohama, Viel Caverro, wrote to Santiago that “Chile, on the Pacific littoral, has its natural market [in Japan], more so than Europe and even more than North America onto which nature has imposed many inconveniences.”<sup>217</sup> Chilean Minister Alfredo Irarrázaval described in 1913 the numerous “surprising similarities that reveal, at the opposite ends of the same transpacific diagonal, a kind of pre-established harmony between Japan and Chile.”<sup>218</sup>

Chileans thus recognized Japan as an instructive foil for nations, such as their own, who had lost their way. A prominent Santiago periodical, *La Unión*, likewise prodded the Chilean government in 1913 to “send our students, our engineers, and our workmen so that they might observe, study, and profit from the many valuable things which Japan has.”<sup>219</sup> Chilean Minister, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, hoped for Chileans to study and “become imbued with the general ideas, specific methods, practices of economic administration, and other knowledge that could be of great utility for our own legal order and methodical progress.”<sup>220</sup> In 1939, Chilean Minister Armando Labra Carvajal, acknowledged that “I come from an occidental psychology to take up your spirit and receive lessons...to know the mechanisms of your industries, the power of your commerce, the complexities of your creativity, the purpose of your great nation with which it advances towards progress...I wish to understand the mysteries of your methods because my country is an immense garden to be transformed.”<sup>221</sup>

Nationalist intellectuals also weighed in on international order and development in Chile, Japan, and the world. In 1910, influential journalist and co-founder of Chile’s nationalist party, Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, published a monograph blaming Chile’s domestic unrest and thwarted sovereignty on foreign intrusions. Entitled, *The Conquest of Chile in the Twentieth Century*, the work demanded that Chileans retrieve control of their political economy from the foreign (particularly European) capital to whom Chile’s oligarchic rulers “have not wavered in

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<sup>216</sup> *La Tarde del Mercurio*, Valparaíso. Jueves 23 de noviembre de 1905. Editorial. 3. Appendix, Documento No. 9, in Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japonés, 1897-1911: inicios de la expansión diplomática y salitrera en el Asia* (Valparaíso: Universidad de la Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educación, Centro de Estudios de la Cuenca del Pacífico, 1999), 324. Original citation: Archivo Nacional, Fondo Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección Consular. Correspondencia del Consulado General de Chile en Japón, China, y Filipinas, 1899-1906. Volumen 870.

<sup>217</sup> Alfredo Viel Caverro to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 68, June 5, 1907. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>218</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, January 20, 1913, Collection 463, 1913, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” Fondo Histórico, RREE Archive, 58.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2D Confidencial, January 17, 1920, Fondo Histórico, Volume 837, Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>221</sup> “Discurso del Ministro de Chile en el almuerzo en su honor dado por el Pan-Pacific Club de Tokyo, el 8 de diciembre de 1939,” included as anexo to: Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 410/94, December 9, 1939. Fondo RREE, Volume 1761, ARNAD.

ceding, alongside pieces of territory in the heart of Chile, the national sovereignty.”<sup>222</sup> Such foreign “conquest” explained Chilean underdevelopment. Though far from sympathetic towards Japan—indeed, he opposed Japanese immigration and generally resented most other nationalities—Pinochet extensively analyzed Japan’s triumphant rise into “a nation capable of facing the great European powers.” He correlated Japanese triumphs to the effective study, extraction, and adaptation specifically for Japanese conditions of “the secrets to the successes” of European civilization. While similarly steeped in and penetrated by foreign knowledge, industry, and culture, Chile had failed to learn, benefit, or apply for themselves European practices of national development “as Japan has done.”<sup>223</sup>

Pinochet was not alone in attributing Chilean underdevelopment to foreign penetration. National Party member, ardent nationalist, and prominent academic, Francisco Antonio Encina Armanet, published in 1912 the incisive monograph, *Our Economic Inferiority: Its Causes, Its Consequences*. Encina lambasted the perils of economic liberalism through which “the foreign merchant strangled our nascent commercial initiatives abroad and, within our own house, pushed us out of international commerce and replaced us in retail commerce.” He added his resentment over foreign retention of two-thirds of nitrate revenues and concluded that Chile was in the throes of an unequal “fight, today within our own borders but later universally, against the great manufacturing powers of our time: England, Germany, the United States, etc.” He concluded that Chile’s “economic capacity is superior to the other Hispanic American countries in general,” but would remain latent until it disentangled itself from its European abductors. Though Encina did not engage with the Japanese case (he only referenced Japan as one example among others of countries who channeled its population into national advancement despite the drain of emigration), his ideas illustrate the crisis of development and economic sovereignty in Chile’s elite and intellectual milieu that compelled others to point to Japan as a solution.<sup>224</sup>

Upon completing his tenure as Chile’s Minister to Japan in 1921 (he was reassigned as Chilean Minister to Venezuela and Cuba), Francisco Rivas Vicuña published a lengthy monograph entitled, *The Real Japan: Notes on a Grand People and the Internal Forces of the Empire*. In it, Rivas outlined an interpretation of global history in which the world gradually modernized and progressed but could not escape the perennial tendency of Old World civilizations to relapse into conflict and war, as seen most recently in 1914. Moreover, he argued that western-driven violence and conquests had bifurcated the world into “the providers of raw materials and the producers of manufactures” which primed global society for constant inter-imperial contests over colonial suppliers, as had erupted in 1914.<sup>225</sup> Rivas even likened Japanese expansionism as to a benign, exploratory impulse that differed little from the Iberians who ventured to explore the Americas or their nomadic ancestors who gradually populated Europe.<sup>226</sup>

Japan, by contrast, proved for Rivas how deliberate domestic development eradicated the dissatisfactions that resulted in the inter-state conflicts and which blighted the west’s record of

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<sup>222</sup> Curiously, Pinochet spared the US as a target of his resentments. To the contrary, he asserted that the US “should serve as our teacher” and that Chileans should, though cautiously, preserve good relations with US officials as it would not be long before US firms acquired nitrate lands. Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, *La conquista de Chile en el siglo XX* (Santiago: Imp. Litografía y Encuadernación “La Ilustración, 1909), 21.

<sup>223</sup> Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, *La conquista de Chile en el siglo XX*, 21, 75, 82, 209-210.

<sup>224</sup> Francisco Encina, *Nuestra inferioridad económica: Sus causas, sus consecuencias* (Santiago: Imprenta Universitaria, 1912), 4, 151,

<sup>225</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón (apuntes para la monografía de un gran pueblo): Las fuerzas internas del Imperio* (Tokio: Katsuo Takahashi, 1921), Preface 1-3.

<sup>226</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón (apuntes para la monografía de un gran pueblo)*, Main text 225.

global leadership: “a general program of methodical development is a far more effective guarantor of peace than submarines and canons.”<sup>227</sup> Indeed, he argued that Japan’s “Buddhist collectivism” outperformed “the empire of economic liberalism...and the Christian individualism of the Occident” through which selfish western states eliminated protections in agriculture and labor which precipitated hunger, civil conflict, and, ultimately, interstate war. If modern society wanted to break this cycle, Japan illuminated “an opposing path.” For the sake of humankind, Rivas urged western nations to shed their fears of Asian development “for their own wellbeing and that of everyone else.” In no clearer terms could *The Real Japan* have praised the merits of Japan’s blueprint for nation-building and international leadership.<sup>228</sup>

Based on exhaustive qualitative and quantitative analyses of Japanese agriculture, livestock rearing, fishing, commerce, industrialization, housing, mining, education, culture, shipping and navigation, and finance, Rivas attributed Japanese development to several factors.<sup>229</sup> Centrally, he pointed to the collectivist commitment to national advancement. He also described Japan’s mighty national defense as “the key feature that uplifts economic independence” and praised the state and industrialists for generously funding the Japanese armed forces, leading to military triumphs against China and Russia. By “forming an administrative program, educating the people, defending the country, creating a currency that could replace rice as the basis of trade, organizing credit, and acquiring capital to finance the state,” Japan sprang from a colonial provider and debtor in 1868 to an industrial center and creditor by 1920.<sup>230</sup>

For these reasons, *The Real Japan* reasoned that Japan’s model was “worthy of imitation,” and offered the world “a great education.” Convinced that Japan’s trajectory “can be imitated with great success,” Rivas published the book specifically because “the study of [Japan’s] origins will be useful for those who wish to learn the essence of a laborious and well-governed people and a nation united in the strongest conceptions of the fatherland.”<sup>231</sup>

Rivas’ monograph did not explicitly indict the west’s theft of Chile’s self-determination or outline how Chile could reproduce Japan’s practices. Yet, the ingredients to Japan’s successes which most enticed Rivas—economic autonomy (in food, housing, defense, transportation, etc.), putting one’s own natural resources to work for one’s own prosperity, and harmonizing all sectors of society to work for national progress—precisely matched with the elements of Japanese society which other Chileans, who *did* point to the replication of Japanese practices as the escape from imperialism, prioritized for Chilean imitation.<sup>232</sup>

While Pinochet, Rivas, and others extolled Japan as the successful inverse for their own failures, many Japanese officials and intellectuals bemoaned their own, as termed by historian Andrew Barshay, “developmental alienation” from the political economic order and trajectories of the North-Atlantic powers.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, many Japanese continued to lament their experience as “latecomers” or “have nots” (a sensation shared by Germans and Russians) in a North Atlantic-

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<sup>227</sup> Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón*, Preface 4-5. Main text 1, 60-77.

<sup>228</sup> Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón*, Preface 4-5. Main text 1-2, 4, 15-30, 60-77, 81-83 118, 183. 191, 226.

<sup>229</sup> Using population growth as a litmus test for progress, Rivas Vicuña diverged from many contemporaries who anxiously pondered Japanese agricultural poverty, overpopulation, and dependence on foreign imports. By contrast, Rivas Vicuña contended that Japan enjoyed sustainable autonomy in food, commerce, navigation, and industry and that its systems were sufficiently robust to support population growth over the decades to come.

<sup>230</sup> Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón*, Main text 1-2, 4, 15-30, 118, 183, 189.

<sup>231</sup> Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón*, Preface 4-5. Main text 1, 81-83, 191, 226.

<sup>232</sup> Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón*, Main text 60, 117.

<sup>233</sup> Andrew Barshay, *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan: The Marxian and Modernist Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

dominated world and explicitly understood successful development to be freedom from the vulnerability to western intrusions. I thus argue that Chileans experienced a similar sensation of “developmental alienation.” But while Japanese resented their own continued struggles, Chileans looked to Japan for company and a way out.

Not all Chilean officials, however, approved of building economic links with Japan as a means of acquiring Japanese knowledge. For example, in 1897 during congressional debates over the nitrate crisis and a treaty with Japan in the works, skeptical members of the Finance and Industry Committee warned that financing diplomatic offices in Japan would further drain a Chilean treasury whose limited funds were better served as direct payments to the Nitrate Propaganda Association who could administer commerce in new Asian markets themselves.<sup>234</sup> The morning edition of *El Diario Ilustrado* on July 17, 1909 similarly criticized the financial commitments of establishing a Legation in Japan as “extravagant” and questioned what “relations there could be with Japan whose benefits would match the cost.” The article declared that the Chileans advocating for diplomacy with Japan had gotten ahead of themselves: “There are not in Japan interests to protect, commerce to which to attend, nor relations to cultivate. At a time when we are debating a fiscal crisis with an imbalanced national budget, it is a grave error to create a Legation in Japan. The legation will be very expensive.”<sup>235</sup> These voices opposed saddling a tapped out Chilean treasury with unworthy financial obligations.

Chilean Pacific visionaries responded paradoxically to the Japan’s racial symbolism of Japan’s ascent in a North Atlantic dominated world.<sup>236</sup> On the one hand, Chileans—as a people subjected by US and British and, by implication, “white” imperialism—appreciated Japan’s racial defiance of the North Atlantic powers. Chilean Minister to Japan, Luis Illanes, commented in 1922 that “Japan has become the protagonist in the fight for liberation for races denominated as inferior and a champion of their rights not previously recognized.”<sup>237</sup> Rivas similarly crowned Japan “the champion of the races of the Orient..showing itself to be the defender of the oriental races and their rights.”<sup>238</sup> Observing Japan’s push for racial equality within the Treaty of Versailles and League of Nations, Chilean Minister Victor Robles criticized in 1922 “the movement to link the principal white nations to limit and intervene in questions of the Extreme Orient.”<sup>239</sup> Chileans thus identified with the racial symbolism of Japan’s defiance of the North Atlantic powers.

On the other hand, however, Chileans identified as a regionally whiter populace superior to the heavily-miscegenated majority of Latin America. As I discuss at length in the Chapter 3, these very same Chilean Pacific visionaries simultaneously warned that miscegenation with Japanese would dilute Chile’s exceptional white homogeneity and thus opposed inviting large-scale Asian labor migration. Chileans told a national creation story in which they attributed

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<sup>234</sup> Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, 62-63.

<sup>235</sup> *El Diario Ilustrado*, Santiago, 17 de julio de 1909. Appendix, Document No. 15, in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, 342-43.

<sup>236</sup> On Japan’s struggle for racial equality within the League of Nations and with the North Atlantic powers, see Xu Guoqi, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), Chapter 7, “The Japanese Dream of Racial Equality.”

<sup>237</sup> “Memoria Informativa de la Legación de Chile en Japón al Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores. Año 1922. Tomo I. Luis Illanes G. Tokyo, 31 de Marzo de 1923.” Included as anexo in Luis Illanes to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 5A, April 5, 1923, Fondo RREE, Volume 2380, ARNAD, 14-16, 36.

<sup>238</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 5D Confidencial, January 25, 1919, Fondo Histórico, Volume 760. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>239</sup> Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 19C Confidencial, May 16, 1922, Fondo Histórico, Volume 938. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive, 15.

their relatively whiter population to a heritage that was more European than indigenous or African. Chileans thus hypocritically seesawed between identifying with Japan's confrontation with white imperialism, while also differentiating themselves from Japanese and others in the post-colonial world.

It was also based on this claim to superiority within Latin America that Pacific visionaries believed Chile to be uniquely capable of reproducing Japan's rapid surge into modernity. Sergio Montt, Chilean Charge d'Affaires in Japan, asserted pejoratively in 1935 that Latin America's less-developed, "tropical zones" could source Japan with merely "bananas and coffee which Japan does not really need."<sup>240</sup> Nitrate imported from a wealthier, more advanced Chilean nation, by contrast to much of Latin America, offered desperately needed nitrogen to Japanese agriculturalists and manufacturers. So, while their economy resembled the overall Latin American model of export-led growth, Chileans claimed that they were uniquely qualified to wield Japanese developmental tools that remained inaccessible for much of Latin America.

In their capacities as diplomat-businessmen and postcolonial world-makers, Chilean Pacific visionaries curiously neglected to untangle or address two ironies at the core of the Pacific vision. First, most of these Chileans seemingly failed to consider that Japan—who they celebrated as a beacon of domestic stability, prosperity, and insubordination to North Atlantic imperialism—was itself an aggressive and violent empire abroad and anything but politically harmonious at home. Indeed, the Japanese state from 1868 and onwards—spanning the Meiji (1868-1912), Taishō (1912-1926), and Shōwa (1926-1989) periods—successfully industrialized, profited, modernized, and consolidated a vast empire in Asia at the expense of tremendous social strife, political polarization, and violence. Second, the Pacific vision ironically outlined an escape from Chile's core-periphery dependency by substituting for the North Atlantic an alternate Japanese imperial core whom Chile would supply with raw materials. While ostensibly offering Chileans the means to repossess nitrate wealth and establish a more equitable, reliable, and sustainable trade relationship with Japan than they had with Britain or the US, the Pacific vision would actually prolong Chile's status as a commodity frontier and its dependency on exports and foreign markets. That Chileans either deliberately or carelessly overlooked these ironies suggests the Pacific vision tells us a lot about Chile and how Chileans interpreted the world around them; but it did not necessarily accurately portray Japan or genuinely resolve Chile's core-periphery confinement.

Several years earlier, Irrarrázaval even equated Chile and Japan in their expansionary ambitions. Irrarrázaval in 1912 likened Japanese Formosa (the island of Taiwan that Japanese troops captured after the Sino-Japanese war in 1895) to Chile's province of Tacna (which Chilean troops occupied through war with Peru in 1889 and over which Chile retained a legally murky sovereignty thereafter) to illustrate that Chile and Japan admirably defended their national interests abroad.<sup>241</sup> In early 1940, one policy report explained that "Japan understands that [Latin America] is not exclusively the sphere of US economic influence and so do not see their commercial forays into these countries as a provocative intervention on their part, but rather, to the contrary, as a necessary measure of defense against the embargoes of Japanese exports practiced by the US." Japan's pivot to Latin America seemed "logical" if not benign in the

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<sup>240</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 81, September 9, 1935, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1472. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive. And Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 17, February 9, 1935. Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD.

<sup>241</sup> Alfredo Irrarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, "Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América," 59.

imperial contest over the Pacific.<sup>242</sup> Chilean Pacific visionaries thus averted, downplayed, or explained away the moral implications of Japanese imperial expansion (I elaborate on this tension in Chapter 5).

Chilean representatives by the 1920s also carefully managed the public image of their nation-building process before the Japanese and international press. Indeed, Chile cycled through four presidents between September of 1924 and May of 1927 when military general, Carlos Ibañez del Campo, triumphed in a sham election and installed a dictatorship with little tolerance for opposition. Particularly nervous that exposure of shaky domestic politics could create an impression of a Chile unworthy of commercial and diplomatic commitments, Chileans in Japan deliberately projected an image of their nation as sturdy, democratic, and friendly.<sup>243</sup> In the January 8, 1926 edition of the *Chugai Shogyo Shimpo* (*The Universal Daily*), newly-appointed Chilean Minister to Japan Pedro Rivas Vicuña eagerly reassured readers that “Chile recently suffered a deep crisis and has now entered a period of solid reorganization, financed by great foreign investors and the sound administrative judgement of its own governors.”<sup>244</sup> Before the *Ji-Ji Shimpo* (*The News*), Rivas Vicuña reiterated that following some brief political controversies, Chile “was laying the tracks for a path of solid progress.”<sup>245</sup> On May 6, 1928, the Chilean Chargé d'affaires in Japan, C. Alvarez de la Rivera, affirmed in *The Japan Advertiser* that “The general situation of the country is satisfactory...The nitrate crisis, so important among economic considerations, has been happily solved through the energetic actions of the men of the head of government.”<sup>246</sup>

Often at the prodding of Chilean diplomats, periodicals in Japan likewise sang the virtues of a rising Chile. In September of 1929, *The Japan Advertiser* praised how Chile’s “progressive people have, with the assistance of foreign capital, started a vast program of development of the natural riches of the country.” In addition to Chile’s promising copper, coal, and forestry sectors, the article confirmed the global recovery of nitrate exports.<sup>247</sup> In that same year, the Kobe-based *The Japan Chronicle* judged that Chile “was one of the most prosperous countries in the South American Continent” and that Ibañez’s ambitious reforms and public works were “paving the

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<sup>242</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 56/25, January 31, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>243</sup> This stretch included brief stints under military rule as conservative factions within Chile’s congress allied with military pressure to curb the liberal impulses that emboldened Chile’s emerging working and middle classes. Ibañez suppressed opposition movements, subverted Chilean congressional elections, and mobilized the rhetoric of national development to make palatable his receptivity to foreign finance capital which funded his ambitious public works programs. Indeed, Ibañez hoped to mask the volatility of the nitrate industry with ambitious spending in railroad and telecommunications infrastructure, subsidies for agriculture, and by channeling unemployed men into public projects. In short, the relative stability (though not its inauthenticity) of Chile’s democracy teetered delicately throughout the 1920s. On Ibañez and Chilean politics in the 1920s, see Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, Chapter 7.

<sup>244</sup> Chugai Shogyo Shimpo, “El Ministro de Chile nos manifiesta que su país recibe con agrado en su territorio a los súbditos japoneses,” January 8, 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2540, ARNAD. Included in anexos to Pedro Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 1, January 18, 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2540.

<sup>245</sup> *Ji-Ji Shimpo*, “Hoy llega a la capital el Ministro de Chile,” January 8, 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2540, ARNAD. 3625. Included in anexos to Pedro Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 1, January 18, 1926, Fondo RREE, Volume 2540, ARNAD.

<sup>246</sup> *The Japan Advertiser*, “Chile Reports Excellent Year Due to Co-Operation,” May 6, 1928, included in anexos to C. Alvarez de la Rivera to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 46 May 28, 1928, Fondo RREE, Volume 2664, ARNAD.

<sup>247</sup> *The Japan Advertiser*, “The Wealth of Chile: A Pacific State Which is Attracting Foreign Capital.” September 1929, Fondo RREE, Volume 2782, ARNAD.

way for the accomplishment of her brilliant future.”<sup>248</sup> Led by “a fairly uniform race,” *The Japan Times* described in June of 1931 how “Chile is making rapid progress... Today the country is in the midst of what promises to be one of the most significant phases of its history.”<sup>249</sup> Ultimately, the Pacific emerged as a significant theatre of Chilean nation-building.

### **Alfredo Irarrázaval, (Potential) Japanese Nitrate Production in Chile, and the Contest for Chile’s Economic Sovereignty**

Already one of this dissertation’s central protagonists, the Chilean Minister to Japan in the early 1910s, Alfredo Irarrázaval, emerged as perhaps the most vocal advocate of Chile’s quest to shore up both its commerce and its economic autonomy vis à vis relations with Japan. This section of the chapter discusses his confidence in the applicability of Japan’s blueprint for Chile’s national process with which he directly confronted European nitrate producers who opposed the potential competition created by transforming Japan into a principal nitrate market and potentially even a nitrate producer.

Irarrázaval authored some of the most enthusiastic promises for Chile’s Pacific vision. He essentially guaranteed that Japanese nitrate commerce “meets our national expectations...and resolves a problem that can completely change our financial and economic situation.”<sup>250</sup> Taking advantage of Japanese nitrate purchases, Irarrázaval advised, should “be a duty that weighs on the public powers in Chile” and he urged Santiago to see the “immense markets of the Extreme Orient [as] the secure and coming solution to our financial difficulties.”<sup>251</sup> Irarrázaval ultimately determined that Japan offered “infinite lessons and experiences which, if transported to Chile, would allow us to follow in the footsteps that have led [Japan], in so few years, to such surprising heights of prosperity.”<sup>252</sup> Irarrázaval could not have more forcefully linked nitrate commerce in Japan to Chile’s opportunity to deploy Japan’s playbook for development and stability.

Furthermore, though Japan did not share Latin America’s post-colonial heritage, its “new country” youth of the and legible struggle Anglo-American imperialism resonated with nationalists such as Irarrázaval:

The example of what Japan can accomplish is an immediate and practical model for the application of certain governing procedures and economic principles which should undoubtedly exert a healthy influence upon new countries, like ours, which search for solutions to guide their still uncertain destinies. It is only logical that we should take inspiration from this new country and adopt the methods which have served them in the modern era to triumph in place of continuing to follow economic theories that come to us from European countries. Europe already surpassed long ago its initial period of progress and consequently today stands matured and strengthened. Considering Japan’s model of

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<sup>248</sup> *The Japan Chronicle*, “The Chilean Republic: A Review of its Resources.” September 18, 1929, Fondo RREE, Volume 2782, ARNAD.

<sup>249</sup> The article elaborated that the Chilean state effectively adapted to the Great Depression by increasing import tariffs to protect Chilean manufacturers and by putting the reported \$422.6 million in US investments to work to improve its infrastructure. With this figure, Chile received the largest sums of US finance capital anywhere in Latin America, with Argentina placing second with \$331 million. *The Japan Times*, “Chile Making Bid for World Industry,” June 29, 1931, Fondo RREE, Volume 2304, ARNAD.

<sup>250</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Enrique Rodríguez, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 15, December 14, 1911, Fondo RREE, Volume 1607, ARNAD.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” Oficio No. 15, January 20, 1913, Collection 463, Fondo Histórico, RREE Archive, 72.

improvement and prosperity, it would convenience us to study its financial mechanisms.<sup>253</sup>

Irarrázaval also identified Japan's generous public spending as a critical tool of development. Comparing side-by-side public expenditures in agriculture, military and defense, public works, healthcare, public hygiene, primary and university education, firefighters and police, and libraries and museums, Irarrázaval calculated that Japan, despite possessing a smaller population and far fewer federal employees, consistently and dramatically outspent Chile. Generous public funding enabled Japan "to not delay or obstruct its progress, and...not fall behind."<sup>254</sup>

As thus the loudest devotee to the Pacific vision, Irarrázaval led a project in 1912 to initiate Japanese production of nitrate in Chile. Backed by diplomat-businessmen in both Chile and Japan, Irarrázaval proposed that Chile auction off nitrate-rich lands and/or production plants at reasonable rates to Japanese firms who themselves would produce in Chile the nitrate demanded in Japan. The Toyo Kisen Kaisha (the Japanese steamship company with the only direct Japan-South America routes and which already transported the majority of Japan's nitrate purchases) would then ship the product directly to Yokohama.<sup>255</sup> Transferring nitrate production, labor, shipping, and distribution to Japanese hands, Irarrázaval reasoned, would relieve an overburdened Chilean state which could then sit back and enjoy a durable spike in export tax revenues.<sup>256</sup> Irarrázaval even recommended that Chile incentivize Japanese firms with additional subsidies for production and shipping.

Irarrázaval seemingly did not consider the irony in seeing an escape from Chile's dependency on European investors and markets by selling property and extraction rights to an alternative set of foreign, imperialist—in this case, Japanese—actors. But because he so adamantly trusted the political economic compatibilities linking Chile and Japan, Japanese activity in Chile perhaps seemed palatable and strategic while European intervention seemed exploitative and detrimental.

Though the proposal intrigued businessmen-diplomats in both Chile and Japan, the London-based Nitrate Committee (the representative body of the Nitrate Propaganda Association with which European-owned nitrate producers in Chile were affiliated) energetically opposed Japanese firms acquiring *salitreras*. The Committee framed its opposition through a supposed ideological allegiance to state abstention from free markets, which Chilean state subsidies and perks for Japanese firms would compromise. More likely, however, the European producers feared the threat of sharing limited remaining tracts of nitrate-rich land with Japanese producers who were not aligned with their conglomerate and whose nitrate would thus replace their sales in Japan's market. Hypocritically ignoring that a monopolistic command over Chilean property and resources is precisely what the European producers currently enjoyed, the Committee warned

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<sup>253</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Pedro Montenegro, Ministro de Hacienda de Chile, Oficio No. 1, February 15, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 2-3.

<sup>254</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Pedro Montenegro, Ministro de Hacienda de Chile, Oficio No. 1, February 15, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 15.

<sup>255</sup> Various representatives from Toyo Kisen Kaisha, the Commerce Department of Japan's Foreign Ministry Mitsui Bussan Kaisha, and powerful trading companies such as Mitsui Bussan Kaisha expressed interest in entering into nitrate production in Chile. Alfredo Irarrázaval to Renato Sánchez García de la Huerta, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 219, June 18, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>256</sup> Irarrázaval cited both the declining deposits of nitrate caliche and dwindling labor supply to calculate that the cost of nitrate production between 1880 and 1912 had doubled, thus further illustrating the appeal of shifting the responsibilities of production to Japanese firms. Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 246, June 9, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

that special subsidies for a Japanese nitrate could enable a “monopoly” that would weaken other national shippers and stifle free opportunities for “Chilean, English, German, and other national industrialists.”<sup>257</sup>

In the subsequent diplomatic showdown with the producers, Irarrázaval understood himself to be fighting for Chile’s economic sovereignty against foreign intervention. Ideologically, Irarrázaval elucidated the folly of implementing policy emanating from “the dominant spirit of the United Kingdom.” He explained how “the big, the strong, the triumphant, are committed supporters of free competition, while the weak who need help, support the theory of protectionism.”<sup>258</sup> Therefore, the European producers would always prioritize supposedly free competition in “the more established though less promising region [in Europe] which, moreover, coincides with their own national interests.” Because the European producers clearly possessed no incentive to “concern themselves with interests that are not their own...the Chilean state should do the same when it comes to its own national interests.”<sup>259</sup> It thus struck Irarrázaval that this very contest over Japanese nitrate production presented the opportunity to make a preemptive strike for Chile’s autonomy and live up to Japan’s example of recovering the economic sovereignty from North Atlantic imperialism.

As he made the case, Irarrázaval invoked contemporary scholarship to convince Santiago that Chile possessed dwindling time, nitrate reserves, and geopolitical capital through which the industry could innovate, such as by inviting Japanese producers. He cited *La crisis salitrera* (1910) and *Cuestiones salitreras* (1911) by Chilean engineer, government minister, and foremost intellectual authority on nitrate, Alejandro Bertrand Huillard (with whom officials in Santiago were very familiar).<sup>260</sup> Through Bertrand’s books, which urged Chilean legislators to insert the state more forcefully into the industry, Irarrázaval illuminated a legal pathway for Chile’s congress to authorize subsidies for Japanese nitrate producers and shippers.<sup>261</sup> For Irarrázaval, this initiative could reverse Chile’s “deplorable custom of remaining indifferent towards the solution of our greatest problems while the materialization of even the most predictable outcome ends up catching us off guard. For this reason, a revision in nitrate export policy is a pivotal, transcendental question that one of these days we will have to address head-on.”<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Chile en Londres (forwarded to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile), Oficio No. 283, August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 9, 14, 24.

<sup>258</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Chile en Londres (forwarded to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile), Oficio No. 283, August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 1-3, 10.

<sup>259</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 330, October 23, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>260</sup> Irarrázaval cited these works: Alejandro Bertrand Huillard, *La crisis salitrera (1910): Estudio de sus causas y caracteres y de la condiciones favorables que caracterizan a la industria y comercio del salitre para evolucionar en el sentido de su concentración económica* (Paris: L. Michaud, 1910). Alejandro Bertrand Huillard, *Cuestiones salitreras: mercados del mediterráneo con un mapa de las redes ferroviarias y líneas de navegación que sirven ese litoral: condiciones de éxito de la propaganda* (Paris: Pierre Landais Editor, 1911). Mentioned in Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Chile en Londres (forwarded to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile), Oficio No. 283, August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 17.

<sup>261</sup> Bertrand emerged as a loud proponent of the reforms in the nitrate industry which US-owned Guggenheim firms would initiate once they entered the industry in the early 1920s. One of his subsequent monographs, *The Chilean Nitrate Industry: Technology and Economics*, advocated for the technological and organizational overhaul of a nitrate industry that was falling into dilapidation because of mismanagement, complacency, and antiquated technology. Alejandro Bertrand, *The Chilean Nitrate Industry: Technology and Economics* (Paris: Impremerie Vaugirard, 1920), 78-79. Volume 5, Fondo Publicaciones del Salitre, Fonde Salitre, ANH.

<sup>262</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 246, June 9, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

Caught in between subservience to European capital and its own diplomats who outlined a way out through economic links with Japan, the Chilean state ultimately rejected Irarrázaval's proposal for Japanese nitrate production in Chile. A blend of ambivalence and dependence on European capital informed this decision. Chilean Foreign Minister Antonio Huneeus admitted his interest in "some sort of convenient adjustment to assure ourselves of increased carriage of nitrate to Asia," but refused to endorse Japanese acquisition of *salitreras* "because the other foreign elements would be offended."<sup>263</sup> Seen in this light, therefore, Irarrázaval's showdown with the European nitrate producers demonstrates how the Pacific vision melded into a proxy contest over Chile's economic self-determination. This outcome in 1912 mirrored the general inability of Chile's Pacific visionaries to overcome their nation's subservience to and dependence on foreign capital.

### **Chilean Nation-Building in the Pacific During War Time**

Once the US replaced British predominance in the nitrate industry in the 1920s, Chileans shifted their outlook towards the Pacific shifted from a repudiation of British imperialism to asking how Japan's conquest of global power status and its rapidly deteriorating relations with the US would impact Chile's regional interests. Unlike the large majority of Latin Americans who severed ties with Japan and reinforced their alignments with the US as Japan's military violently stormed through East Asia in the early 1930s, Chileans delayed a declaration of allegiances and debated which horse to back in the battle over Pacific order. Many Chilean Pacific visionaries clung to their admiration of Japan as a model for nationhood right up to January of 1943 when overwhelming US geopolitical pressure and the likelihood of a US victory in the Second World War compelled the Chilean senate to terminate relations with Japan. In other words, Chilean nation-building in the Pacific by the 1930s came to revolve around maintaining neutrality and agency in their international affairs.

Chilean Pacific visionaries seemed to fully comprehend the characteristics of Japanese imperialism and the ideological contests underpinning the US-Japan competition over the Pacific. Indeed, many reflected at length on the utopian fantasies of Japan's destinarian imperialism, its alliance with European fascism and Naziism, and the adversarial response by a theoretically virtuous, liberal US who possessed little tolerance for Japan's geopolitical challenge to its own imperial appetite in the Pacific. Discussing in 1934 Japan's recent retreat from the League of Nations, Chilean diplomat Sergio Montt assessed how "The Old World political system which through its colonies reaches into the North Pacific is based on an equilibrium that has now been broken by the emergence of a grand new empire: Japan." He elaborated that for some time Japan seemed "called to a great but still distant future but has now jumped into the scene and today... with one of the best militaries in the world and an incomparable industrial capacity, is not content playing a secondary role and aspires to hegemony within its own continent... Will Great Britain and America tolerate this policy?" In other words, Montt explicitly understood Japan's national development, its challenge for Pacific supremacy, and the retaliation of a reactionary western world order as one in the same story.<sup>264</sup>

Chileans described even Japanese ideology as an Asian Monroe Doctrine. One 1935 policy report from Santiago asserted: "Japan practices in Asia a policy similar to that announced

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<sup>263</sup> Antonio Huneeus, Ministro de Relaciones, Culto, y Colonización, to Alfredo Irarrázaval, October 26, 1912. Code B1487862. Accessed at Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.

<sup>264</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 3 Confidencial, April 30, 1934, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1380. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

in the famous Monroe Doctrine. Japan's preponderant position, among the great powers, its naval and military power, its distinguished position obtained in the international community, and the development achieved by its industries and commerce, gives it the right, according to Japanese authorities, to exercise over the Extreme Orient an international policy aimed at maintaining order and peace in Oriental Asia." And like the US in the western hemisphere, under this policy, Japan would "oppose foreign influences in the Extreme Orient."<sup>265</sup>

Chileans cast themselves as protagonists in the process of shaping Pacific order. Rivas commented in 1920 that "Chile is fully aware of its position and its obligation to maintain peace in the Great Ocean. Within its capacities, it will always give its best effort to guarantee the tranquility necessary for progress, and thus preserve the total international noninvolvement that characterizes our history."<sup>266</sup> In 1940 Chilean minister to Japan Armando Labra Carvajal commented that the Pacific's "equilibrium is currently maintained but fight over its hegemony is rapidly approaching."<sup>267</sup> Chile, as one of the "young" nations of the Americas ought to closely follow the political economic "problems of the Pacific, because I believe them to be ours."<sup>268</sup> Labra concluded a year later in 1941 that war in Europe and East Asia "has converted the Pacific into the axis of global history...Chile, which lives in the reflection of the great powers of the Pacific in these times of world history should be vigilant and alert in guarding its interests and liberties."<sup>269</sup> In no clearer terms could Chileans have inserted themselves as protagonists in the potential design of Pacific order in the 1930s and 1940s.

In March of 1940, Chilean Minister to Japan, Armando Labra Carvajal, meditated further on Chilean strategy as an invested participant in the Pacific's bifurcating order:

Between Japan and Chile are the United States. Are they a barrier to our commerce? Or are they a gateway to our commercial expansion in the Extreme Orient? Are the United States imperialist? And in this game what will be our destiny? What will be the destiny of the South American nations?...What will be our position in [Pacific] transit?...What is certain is that two material forces are struggling over the destiny of the ocean in which our national destiny is also integrated. The United States, acting under the empire of its democratic ideals, and Japan, acting under sentiments of pride and sacrifice established by twenty-six centuries of history, gaze upon one single objective: primacy in the Pacific. Are both countries 'imperialist'? Who cares! Our action is integrated with interests and powers more all-encompassing than ours. What should we do, therefore?...Chile needs, regardless of where they come from, the instruments of work with which serious countries throughout history have constructed economic greatness. Those instruments come from all places, from all countries, without prior specificities and prejudices.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Departamento Diplomático, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores to Señor Encargado de Negocios de Chile en el Japón, Oficio No. 644/6, November 30, 1935, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1472. RREE Archive.

<sup>266</sup> Francisco Riva Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 90D Confidencial, December 20, 1920, Fondo Histórico, Volume 837. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>267</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, "Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1939," March 12, 1940, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1846, RREE Archive, 24.

<sup>268</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to S. D. Abraham Ortega Aguayo, January 14, 1940, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1846. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>269</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, "Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1940," 1941, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1939, RREE Archive, 1-2.

<sup>270</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 105/56, March 9, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

Labra explicitly prioritized Chilean interests over any ideological allegiance to the US or alarm over Japanese imperialism. Military conflict in East Asia (whether the current war between China and Japan or a hypothetical one between Japan and the US), in other words, represented a proxy for competition between visions of international political economy in the Pacific.

Though I discuss this episode further in Chapter 5, a Chilean economic delegation's visit Japan, China, and Manchukuo in early 1937 (financed by the Japanese government) similarly reveals how Chilean Pacific visionaries clung to their belief in the benefit of relations with Japan for Chile's national process. Influential lawyer, temporary ambassador to Japan, and mission leader Maximiano Errázuriz gushed over the methodical ascent of Japan's empire and nation as he toured its sites: "In a nutshell, they showed us the Empire...and the immense industrial potential of this young country. We were impressed by the size of the factories, the variety and excellence of their products, and, above all else, the discipline and achievements of the people who obey, under orders, a formidable program of material development." Errázuriz further praised Japan's pisciculture industry that he labeled "the most perfect in the world and which could, therefore, serve as a model for us to create our own one day. We admired in the countryside a more intensive and efficient agriculture than exists anywhere else."<sup>271</sup>

Following several weeks of ostentatious events in Japan to promote nitrate and other Chilean-Japanese commerce, the Chilean delegation arrived in Manchuria.<sup>272</sup> There, Errázuriz admired the "question of national honor" through which the Japanese built the physical and moral pillars for nationhood for the city of Hsingking (recently captured by the Japanese Imperial Army and formerly known in Chinese as Changchun) that would host Manchukuo's capital: "They are giving great attention to hygiene and education. They are perfecting the means of communication to eradicate banditry once and for all. Thousands of kilometers of railroads and highways are being built in a rhythm that seems impossible for anywhere else." Japan's seemingly virtuous and admirable contributions to the region's infrastructure appealed to Errázuriz as the only educational aspect of visiting China which otherwise "had not reached Japan's heights of industrialization so, therefore, we did not have much to learn here." In other words, Japan's imperial expansion (achieved through the relentless violence of the Japanese army) seemingly only heightened the instructive allure of Japan's capacity to build the literal and conceptual pillars of nationhood.<sup>273</sup>

*Asia America* (a monthly journal on Japanese-Latin American relations edited by Venezuelan diplomats in Japan) published a special issue commemorating the Chilean Economic Mission. Various Chilean and Japanese Pacific visionaries contributed short articles correlating Pacific commerce to Chilean national advancement. In an article entitled, "Chile Looks to the Orient," Chilean consul General, Carlos de la Barra, contended that though it was the "furthest neighbor of Japan on the Pacific" Chile hoped "to see and understand something of the stupendous progress and endeavor of the Japanese people."<sup>274</sup> Manuel Cuadros, a Chilean diplomat and leading nitrate representative in Japan, likewise emphasized his "admiration of the people of this Island Empire...I feel that members of the coming Mission are fortunate in being

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<sup>271</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 21-37.

<sup>272</sup> The travel through Manchuria was the only portion of the Chilean delegation's travels that was not funded by the Japanese government because Chile had not officially recognized Manchurian statehood.

<sup>273</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 21-37.

<sup>274</sup> Carlos de la Barra "Chile Looks to the Orient: Economic and Commercial Mission from Chile Visits the Japanese Empire," *Asia América* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 1-2. Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

able to see first-hand and experience for themselves something of the life and work of the Japanese.”<sup>275</sup> Chilean Minister Martín Figueroa also published a message celebrating the Chileans’ visit to Japan: “It is undeniable that Japan attracts special attention in these moments from all countries of the world. Whether observing up close the progress it has achieved, assimilating in few years the material advantages of occidental society...or observing the personal knowledge of its ruling elites or of its disciplined and laborious masses, the fact is that even us Chileans have come to its land in order to understand what Japan is.”<sup>276</sup>

The Japanese contributors to the *Asia America* volume painted Japan’s international stewardship in the Pacific as the peaceful and prosperous alternative to a North Atlantic-led world order crumbling into war. Chokuro Kadono, President of Japan’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stated that “Currently, uncertainty reigns in Europe. The waves of the Pacific, by contrast, remain calm. I believe that durable peace and growing prosperity can be achieved in the Pacific Ocean only through economic connections and by the trading companies who reach across, figuratively and physically, the countries that border the Pacific Ocean.”<sup>277</sup> Ryuzo Asama, a director of Japanese exporter guilds for Latin America reinforced Kadono’s confidence that Japanese-Chilean commerce contributed to “international amnesty and global peace.”<sup>278</sup>

Chileans believed that abstaining from the intensifying US-Japanese conflict could catapult Chilean development and buttress its national self-determination. Chileans celebrated an approximate 300% spike in Japanese nitrate consumption between 1939 and 1940 (which supplied Japan’s overburdened agricultural and armament producers) as a reliable revenue stream derived directly from Japan’s war with China that one Chilean report predicted to “not have an end in sight.”<sup>279</sup> Labra further promoted neutrality “so that we can realize great national destinies for ourselves” which would be premised on “liberty within the law, territorial integrity, and absolute sovereignty.” Chilean president, Pedro Aguirre Cerda, committed in 1940 to “vigilant neutrality” in the global war as “the means of enabling national progress” and “strengthening our economic independence.”<sup>280</sup>

Japanese officials made similar arguments. In June 1942 (when Chile and Argentina remained the only neutral Latin American states), Japanese Foreign Minister, Shigenori Togo, likewise praised Chile’s resolute neutrality, despite US geopolitical pressure, as proof of the strength of “Chile’s sovereignty and independence.”<sup>281</sup> Later that year, one Japanese cabinet official similarly declared his “profound respect” for Chile and Argentina remaining neutral “despite all the schemes of the United States and Great Britain.” He concluded that “the only

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<sup>275</sup> Manuel Cuadros Cerda “Mensaje del Agregado Comercial de Chile,” *Asia America* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 2-3. Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>276</sup> Martín Figueroa, “Mensaje,” *Asia America* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 10-11. Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>277</sup> Chokuro Kadono, “Mensaje de bienvenida a la misión económica Chilena.” *Asia América* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 14-15 Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>278</sup> Ryuzo Asama, “Al recibir la misión comercial Chilena,” *Asia América* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 15-16 Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>279</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 56/25, January 31, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>280</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1940,” 1941, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1939, Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive, 9-14.

<sup>281</sup> *The Japan Times & Advertiser*, “Foreign Minister Praises Chileans: Expresses Firm Conviction Republic Stands Against United States,” June 14, 1942, Fondo RREE, Volume 4649, ARNAD.

means for South America to secure its progress is eliminating the obstacles of the current conflagration and maintaining neutrality.”<sup>282</sup>

Despite the seemingly unwavering strength of the Pacific vision among Chilean diplomats in Japan, the Chilean senate voted to sever diplomatic relations with Japan on January 22, 1943. Ultimately, because the US represented a significantly larger trading partner for Chile and because of mounting indications that the US would soon prevail in the Second World War, the Chilean government finally allied with the US. In doing so, the Chilean state shut the window for transforming Japan into a massive nitrate market and the concomitant effort to emulate and assimilate Japanese methods of national development. The Japanese government interpreted the termination of relations essentially as a declaration of war. The following day, Japanese police occupied the Chilean Legation, seized its property, and placed Labra, other members of the Chilean legation, and his family under supervised house arrest for the subsequent eight months.<sup>283</sup>

Japan described Chile’s termination of relations with the Axis as the forfeit of Chilean sovereignty. The *Tokyo Nichi-Nichi* in Osaka described how “American agents have spent millions of dollars to bribe Chilean senators and the US will very likely, after pushing Chile to cut its relations with the Axis, obtain bases in that country for its military operations and will eventually bring them into the war. Chile is undergoing the most serious crisis it has ever experienced since the founding of its statehood.”<sup>284</sup> Takomoto Hori, the official spokesperson for Japan’s foreign ministry, vilified Chile’s “great folly” of bending to “the strong pressure of the United States” and predicted that “soon Chileans will suffer in their territory the stationing of crude and arrogant American troops.” Hori lamented Chile’s “abandonment on her own accord of her controlling position in the waters of the Pacific Coast of South America.”<sup>285</sup> These Japanese essentially accused Chile of relinquishing the very geopolitical capital and economic autonomy which Chilean Pacific visionaries hoped they would secure by extending links with Japan and shedding dependence on the US and Europe.

Labra retorted that Chile was a “free and sovereign” country who acted exclusively on the will of its people, rather than from US pressure. He elaborated sardonically: “When we were neutral, Chile was a great South American power whose men of government were wise and decent. The Japanese understood neutrality not as the exercise of a right of sovereign nations but as cooperation with the Axis cause.” Yet, once Chile cut ties with Japan and morphed into “puppets of Uncle Sam... our national integrity stopped being associated with a free country.”<sup>286</sup> That actors on both sides evaluated Chile’s geopolitical alignments in terms of either the failure or the carrying out of its national autonomy, illustrates how the Pacific was indeed a battleground over national sovereignty, imperialism, and competing political economic orders.

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<sup>282</sup> Armando Labra Carbajal to Ernesto Barros Jarpa, Oficio No. 57, August 1, 1942, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2049. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>283</sup> Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive.

<sup>284</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 1-3.

<sup>285</sup> Hori’s statement is copied in the translation of the following newspaper article, though the name of newspaper is not specified. “Chile Severs Ties with Axis, Notice Handed to Nippon.” January 21, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive.

<sup>286</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 27.

Labra subsequently portrayed Japan as a model for nationhood that was to be *avoided*. He surmised that Japan “triumphed in the competitive fight against the leading industrialized and commercial nations of the world” only at the cost of widening civil unrest, inequality, and exploitative labor practices. Indeed, he disapproved of Japan’s totalitarian state whose surveillance and policing of daily life restricted the freedoms and wellbeing of the citizenry. Premised on his “four years of studies of Japan’s [society] my opinion of Japan and the Japanese is TERRIBLE.”<sup>287</sup> He also denounced Japanese expansionism, once interpreted by Chileans as a virtuous counterpoint to Anglo-American imperialism, “as nothing more than the strangling and captivity of East Asia by the samurai.”<sup>288</sup> Thus, while many Chilean diplomats in Japan (Labra included) previously saw in Japan the formula for national prosperity, sovereignty, and admirable international leadership, they now observed a morally bankrupt menace meriting little admiration.

### Conclusion

This chapter has traces how some Chileans’ confidence in nitrate’s necessary and profitable future in Japan became intertwined with the politics and controversies of Chilean nation-building at home in the 1900s and 1910s, before becoming embroiled in the international wartime politics in the Pacific of the 1930s and 1940s. Pacific visionaries claimed that building a nitrate chain with Japan would not only revive the nitrate industry and Chilean federal revenues, but would also permit Chile to absorb and emulate the Japanese model for fortifying its nationhood and retrieving the command over the national political economy had been hijacked by European capital. The Pacific thus emerged as a critical theatre of Chilean politics and nation-building.

In the end, however, Chile’s Pacific vision never materialized as its architects intended. Attempts to escape from European and US subordination by substituting for the North Atlantic an alternative Japanese Pacific imperial core which Chile would serve as a commodity frontier (an irony which my actors neglected to untangle), failed to upgrade Chile’s international standing or reassert its economic sovereignty. A mixture of apathy and hostility among other Chilean and foreign elites towards the proposals of the Pacific visionaries precluded any radical realignments of Chile’s political economy towards the Pacific. And the Chilean state essentially shut the narrow window for building relations with Japan when it severed relations with Axis powers in January of 1943 during the Second World War. This chapter thus tells the story of the vision of an alternative future for the Pacific in which formerly subjugated nations like Japan and Chile could wrest command over international relations from imperial, and particularly British control, and set the ground rules for commerce and diplomacy, until the Second World ultimately handed Pacific hegemony to the US. Up until then, however, Chilean advocates of the Pacific vision saw in Japan a compatible formula for reversing foreign subjugation and they remained committed to trans-Pacific commerce and the concomitant acquisition of Japanese methods for national administration.

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<sup>287</sup> Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 50-53.

<sup>288</sup> Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 7.

### Chapter 3: The Pacific Vision, Japanese Immigration, and the Debate over Race and Nation in Chile

Between 1868, when the Meiji Restoration reintroduced Japan to foreign engagements, and the early 1940s, approximately 300,000 Japanese migrated to Latin America.<sup>289</sup> Planters, employers, firms, and states across the hemisphere pivoted to Japanese labor to make up for the loss of enslaved Black labor, exploited indigenous labor, and, most recently, several hundred thousand Chinese workers known as “coolies” who temporarily resolved Latin American labor scarcities until the coolie system itself was abolished in the 1870s. Latin Americans contracted Japanese men for agriculture and exports, railroad and urban infrastructure construction, and for rural colonization schemes, all of which were undertaken to advance the lofty ambitions of late nineteenth-century liberal Latin American states.<sup>290</sup>

Though tens of thousands of Japanese men (some bringing their families) arrived in Peru, Brazil, and Mexico, similarly large-scale migration to Chile never developed.<sup>291</sup> This fact is surprising because Chile suffered similar labor shortages at the exact same time and for the exact same reasons as much of the rest of Latin America who opted for Japanese immigration to resolve the labor question. Urbanization and collective labor mobilization (processes that exacerbated labor shortages throughout the country) hit the Chilean nitrate industry particularly hard and only deepened the industry’s commercial struggles of the 1910s and 1920s (as discussed in the previous chapters). For years, elites attempted and failed to mitigate Chilean labor shortages with either internal migration or with European workers. So, while sharing labor crises with their hemispheric neighbors that deeply threatened an already stumbling industry on which national revenues relied, why did Chile never receive large scale Japanese immigration?

I argue that internal contradictions over defining the terms and future of Chilean nationhood precluded the arrival of Japanese laborers that some Chileans sincerely believed

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<sup>289</sup> Toake Endoh, *Exporting Japan: Politics of Emigration to Latin America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009). Pedro Iacobelli estimates the number of emigrants to be 240,000 for South America. Pedro Iacobelli, *Postwar Emigration to South America from Japan and the Ryuku Islands* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

<sup>290</sup> Japanese immigrants first arrived in Callao, Peru in 1899 as the first of approximately 20,000 Japanese that immigrated to the country by the 1940s. Approximately 200,000 Japanese migrated to Brazil where the state hoped to utilize Japanese settler colonies to stimulate agriculture and develop infrastructure in underdeveloped peripheral regions, especially in the Amazon. Over 100,000 Japanese migrated to the US beginning in the 1880s via California primarily for agricultural labor. Tens of thousands of Japanese emigrated to Mexico for work on haciendas, railroad construction, and in urban factories. Following the Second World War, a new generation of emigrants settled in familiar receiving nations such as Brazil but also new destinations in remote regions of Paraguay, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic. Daniel M. Masterson with Sayaka Funada-Classen. *The Japanese in Latin America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

<sup>291</sup> The Spanish language historiography on Asian migration to Chile is gradually emerging. See: Mauricio Jara Fernández, “Chile y Japón En La Decada de Los ’10: Un Homenaje, Un Negocio y Una Discriminación,” *Notas Históricas y Geográficas* 7 no.8 (1996): 89–99. Mauricio Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón, 1897-1911: inicios de la expansión diplomática y salitrera en el Asia* (Valparaíso: Universidad de la Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educación, Centro de Estudios de la Cuenca del Pacífico, 1999). Alfonso Díaz Aguad, “Los consulados chilenos en oriente y su participación en el proceso de inmigración china al norte de Chile (1910-1929),” *Diálogo Andino* 27, (2006): 61-74. Pamela Fernández Navas, “La otredad incivilizada en el mundo del salitre. El caso de indígenas bolivianos e inmigrantes asiáticos en Tarapacá, 1900-1910,” *Revista Latinoamericana* 14, no. 42, (2015): 79-96. José Antonio González Pizarro, “Desde la influencia del darwinismo social hasta el imperio de los derechos humanos. Inmigración en Chile entre 1907 y 2018,” *Migraciones y Derechos Humanos* 77, no. 169 (2020): 325-348. José Antonio González Pizarro, Claudio Llanos Reyes, Baldomero Estrada Turra y Marcelo Lufin Varas, “Diplomacia y migración japonesa en Chile: del proyecto salitrero a la tentativa de colonización en el sur: 1913-1930,” *Diálogo Andino* 65, (2021): 291-306.

could have reversed nitrate's—and, by implication, Chile's—recent misfortunes. The severity of the labor shortage in the nitrate industry forced an urgent national conversation over the introduction of first Chinese and, later, Japanese workers. Some key advocates of reorienting the nitrate industry towards Japan contended that intensively-regulated Japanese labor immigration could provide just the jolt that the nitrate industry needed to recover its former pace of production and capture new markets, particularly in Asia. Other elites, who distinguished Chile as the exceptionally white and homogenous Latin American nation, rejected the prospect of racial mixing and pointed to Peru, Brazil, and California as cautionary tales warning against permanent Asian settlement and miscegenation. Put differently, the question of investing in relations with Japan and of Japanese labor immigration mapped onto and intensified local and national debates already underway in Chile over the “social question”—the bitter contest to define Chilean nationhood waged by workers, elites, and the state.

This chapter also makes two interventions into a growing historiography that brings Asian diasporas into the complicated histories of race and nation in Latin America.<sup>292</sup> First, I argue that Chile was an important site in the history of trans-Pacific labor migration in the early 1900s. Because relatively few East Asians migrated there than to elsewhere in the region, scholars routinely omit Chile from the narratives of Asian diasporas to Latin America, including analysis of how trans-Pacific migration in many ways replaced the trans-Atlantic slave trade and inherited its legacies.<sup>293</sup> Nevertheless, the overlooked Chilean case, if not quantitatively, is at least qualitatively important in this history for revealing the inner-workings of Latin American

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<sup>292</sup> C. Harvey Gardiner, *The Japanese and Peru, 1873-1973* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1973). Daniel M. Masterson with Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004). Akemi Kikumia-Yano, ed. *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History of the Nikkei*, (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002). Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Jeffrey Lesser, *A Discontented Diaspora: Japanese-Brazilians and the Meanings of Ethnic Militancy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). Julia María Schiavone Camacho, *Chinese Mexicans: Transpacific Migration and the Search for a Homeland, 1910-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012). Jeffrey Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Kathleen Lopez, *Chinese Cubans: A Transnational History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). Jerry García, *Looking Like the Enemy: Japanese Mexicans, the Mexican State, and US Hegemony* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014). Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era Through World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). Fredy González, *Paisanos Chinos: Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). Ana Paulina Lee, *Mandarin Brazil: Race, Representation, and Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018). Eiichiro Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier: Japanese America and Settler Colonialism in Japan's Borderless Frontier* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019). Jason Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017). Heidi Tinsman, “Narrating Chinese Massacre in the South American War of the Pacific,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 22 no. 3 (2019): 277-313. Sidney Xu Lu, *The Making of Japanese Settler Colonialism: Malthusianism and Trans-Pacific Migration, 1868–1961* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Michael R. Jin, *Citizens, Immigrants, and the Stateless: A Japanese American Diaspora in the Pacific* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022).

<sup>293</sup> It is impossible and perhaps unethical to draw quantitative or qualitative comparisons between the trans-Atlantic slave regime and the trans-Pacific coolie system which replaced it. While hundreds of thousands of Chinese workers arrived in the Americas during the nineteenth century, approximately 12 million enslaved Africans were forced into slavery over several centuries. Yet, some scholars have emphasized their sequential relationship—in that Chinese workers replaced African labor in the Americas and accelerated the abolitionist cause—and also drawn certain parallels between the experiences of forced labor, middle passages, and bondage in the Americas. See Arnold J. Meagher, “The Introduction of Chinese Laborers to Latin America: The Coolie Trade, 1847-1874,” PhD diss., University of California, Davis, 1975. Rebecca Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1860–1899* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

racial hierarchies and anti-Asian xenophobia. Much of the literature portrays anti-Asianism in Latin America as a mere extension of and a capitulation to US “yellow peril” rhetoric with which US officials fortified their hemispheric foreign policy agendas in the lead up to World War II.<sup>294</sup> Yet, the Chilean case aligns with other recent work that suggests that Latin American elites possessed nuanced and organic rationales for excluding Asian immigrants that stemmed from their own uniquely Latin American local and national concerns.<sup>295</sup> Second, I contend that race profoundly guided Chilean nation-builders. Much scholarship on early twentieth-century Chile overlooks race in favor of class and gender as explanatory factors in Chilean social and political history. I argue that Chileans were also preoccupied with promoting and protecting an exceptional white homogeneity through which Chile could avoid the pitfalls of miscegenation experienced by their Latin American neighbors. That this fact particularly comes to light when examining debates over Japanese immigration suggests that race was also a critical dimension of Chilean nation-building.

I thus build on Pedro Iacobelli’s contention that without “ambivalence,” intense internal discord, and xenophobia, “Chile could have received more Asian immigration than Peru or even Brazil.”<sup>296</sup> Yet, I contend that the course of this history in Chile was anything but ambivalent. Rather, Chileans staked out battle lines in this debate that can be seen as proxy battles for the competing ideas about Chile’s past, present, and future.

### **Asian Migration to the Americas**

An uneven Age of Abolition finally arrived in Latin America by the mid-to-late nineteenth century. After most South American governments outlawed slavery and attempted to restrict the coerced labor of indigenous people, employers seeking cheap labor shifted to exploited Chinese contract workers known as “coolies.” Approximately 275,500 Chinese migrated to Peru, Cuba, Brazil, and Mexico for labor on the guano islands (in Peru), plantation agriculture, and for railroad and other infrastructural construction. Chinese debt peonage powered production and economic growth but rarely provided workers with their promised wages, liberties upon completion of labor contracts, or a return voyage to China. Slavery remained legal in Cuba until 1886 and in Brazil until 1888 before both of these states promoted Chinese labor to appease elites and to make abolition more palatable to the planter class. Though theoretically replacing bondage with free labor protected by contracts, the coolie system nevertheless subjected many Chinese workers to deplorable conditions that closely resembled enslavement.<sup>297</sup> By the 1870s, however, worker mutinies, defections, and international outrage

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<sup>294</sup> See, for example, Eiichiro Azuma, “Japanese Immigrant Settler Colonialism in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands,” *Pacific Historical Review* 83 no. 2 (May 2014): 255-276. Erika Lee, “The ‘Yellow Peril’ in the United States and Peru: A Transnational History of Japanese Exclusion, 1920s-World War II,” in *Transnational Crossroads: Remapping the Americas and the Pacific*, ed. Camila Fojas and Rudy P. Guevara Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 315-358. Elliott Young, *Alien Nation*.

<sup>295</sup> I take a cue particularly from sociologists David Scott Fitzgerald and David Cook-Martin who disentangle Latin American anti-Asianism from US diplomatic policy. David Scott Fitzgerald and David Cook-Martin, *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>296</sup> Pedro Iacobelli, *De cara a Asia: pautas en la relación chilena con Japón y China, 1880-1940* (Santiago: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2023), 32.

<sup>297</sup> In Peru, for example, W.R. Grace and Company—a central exporter of guano from and importer of Chinese labor to Peru—managed their shipments of humans in ways eerily reminiscent of their Atlantic slaver predecessors. Firm executives subtracted the losses accrued from the average mortality rate of 10% during the trans-Pacific passage from the profits earned per individual to calculate the value of their human cargo. See Edward Melillo, “The First

produced multinational accords that prohibited the exploitation of Chinese coolie labor. Chinese would continue to emigrate to the Americas in ways both clandestine and state-authorized, but planters and firms in the Americas could no longer draw Chinese workers through coolie labor networks.<sup>298</sup>

Thereafter, Japanese workers (only recently were barred from immigration to North America through the so-called Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907) emerged as a new and viable option for labor. From perception to logistics to institutionalization, the Japanese diaspora to the Americas differed dramatically from its Chinese predecessor. Indeed, Latin Americans vocally distinguished workers hailing from the ascending Japanese empire as the biologically superior and more civilized Asian alternative to Chinese immigrants whom they saw as lazy delinquents seeking an escape from a subjugated nation.

Within Japan, unlike the highly exploitative coolie system managed by British and American firms, a combination of Japanese state actors and firms oversaw the granting and enforcement of labor contracts, offered protections against abuses, and facilitated paths towards business licenses and even naturalization once abroad. Local governments within Japan primarily handled advertising and recruitment while parastatal firms, particularly from the late 1910s and 1920s, oversaw the logistics of emigration.<sup>299</sup> Under institutional supervision, Japanese migrants were theoretically more likely to receive promised wages and avert the violent abuse that befell Chinese laborers. The largest migration firms (such as the Kaigai Kōgyō Kabushiki Kaisha, Morioka Emigration Company, the Meiji Emigration Company, and the Kokoku Emigration Company) helped finance transportation, education, and welfare infrastructure for their colonies in Latin America while also profiting handsomely from transporting emigrants.<sup>300</sup> The state also founded the Emigration Protection Ordinance in 1894 to supervise emigration companies and their operations abroad.<sup>301</sup>

The Japanese state hoped to utilize emigration to Latin America as both a release valve for overpopulation (particularly among its ethnically less-desirable and radically resistant populations on the geographical and political peripheries) and as a tool for extending Japan's imperial project abroad. By the early 1900s, various sectors within Japan's agrarian classes increasingly protested high unemployment, food scarcity (particularly intense riots over rice shortages erupted in 1918), rentier capitalism, intensive taxation, political exclusion, and the many overall growing inequalities that the state hoped to hide under the spectacle of Meiji modernity.<sup>302</sup> Emigration thus enabled the Japanese state to shed rural social agitators (over 50% of emigrants to Latin America originated from Japan's southwestern prefectures and remote

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Green Revolution: Debt Peonage and the Making of the Nitrate Fertilizer Trade, 1840-1930," *The American Historical Review* 177 no. 4 (October 2012): 1028-1060.

<sup>298</sup> See Gardiner, *The Japanese and Peru, 1873-1973*, Lopez, *Chinese Cubans and Young, Alien Nation*.

<sup>299</sup> Endoh, *Exporting Japan*, 6.

<sup>300</sup> This is not to say that Japanese migration firms acted purely to advance national agendas all the time. For example, the Compañía Explotadora de Sud-América, for example, used state subsidies to transport emigrants and build colonies in South America while also claiming 70% of workers' wages. C. Alvarez de la Rivera to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 43, June 4, 1928, Fondo RREE, Volume 2693, Archivo Nacional de la Administración (hereafter ARNAD).

<sup>301</sup> Eiichiro Azuma, "Historical Overview of Japanese Emigration, 1868-2000," in *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History of the Nikkei*, ed. Akemi Kikumia-Yano (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 33.

<sup>302</sup> Iacobelli, *Postwar Emigration to South America from Japan and the Ryuku Islands*.

Okinawa island).<sup>303</sup> In doing so, the state could also repurpose their settler colonies abroad into an extension of Japan's imperial influence (particularly in South America and East Asia).<sup>304</sup> Indeed, Japanese officials hoped that emigration could establish the networks necessary Japanese firms to install themselves in the Americas.

Overall, East Asian diasporic actors dramatically shaped local and national debates over citizenship, belonging, and nationhood across nineteenth and twentieth-century Latin America. In Mexico, Cuba, Peru and Brazil, Chinese and later Japanese workers presented a solution to the predicament of light-skinned elites who struggled to maintain the facade of a socially equal republicanism—in which unfree labor presented an unacceptable contradiction—while still providing their planters with cheap labor, *and* consequently preserving traditional political economic power structures and their own standing atop the racial hierarchy. Simultaneously, however, Asian laborers often encountered violent xenophobia on the ground which produced unforeseen social conflicts. In Mexico in the 1910s and 1920s, for example, insecure revolutionary leaders mobilized around *anti-chinismo* to qualify who Mexicans were *not*—the Chinese—in order to solidify an otherwise wobbly revolutionary Mexican nationhood and hazy notions of the ideal cosmic mestizo race.<sup>305</sup> Following the global economic collapse of 1929, insular and relatively economically successful Japanese communities in South America became easy targets for many otherwise marginalized Latin Americans.<sup>306</sup> After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and lured the US into the Second World War, Peru and the US collaborated in detaining, expelling, and ultimately interning in the US approximately 1,800 Japanese-Peruvians.<sup>307</sup> In short, from the 1880s to the 1940s, the Chinese and Japanese diasporas were impacted by and likewise impacted the many and diverse efforts at state and national identity formation underway across the Americas.<sup>308</sup>

### **Race, Migration, and Labor in Chile**

Conflict and hypocrisy defined the history of internal and external labor migration in Chile since the mid nineteenth-century. Because Chile's founding constitution of 1833 famously included few restrictions to immigration (designed to encourage European arrivals), elites, often espousing the Darwinist vernacular of the day, preferred to welcome only select populations of white Europeans. Primarily coveting Italians, Spaniards, and Germans, Chilean officials shared the ambitions of their South American neighbors to channel migrant workers into underpopulated and underdeveloped regions of the country (particularly to the north and south of

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<sup>303</sup> Emigration from Okinawa, however, was contradictory in that the Japanese state considered Okinawans to be ethnically inferior and thus a liability for its reputation abroad. Japan's state thus attempted (though largely unsuccessfully) at times to obstruct large emigration from the island and at other times hoped to utilize emigration to shed its more radical and ethnically inferior elements. Endoh, *Exporting Japan*, see in particular Chapter 5.

<sup>304</sup> Xu Lu, *The Making of Japanese Settler Colonialism Malthusianism and Trans-Pacific Migration, 1868–1961*.

<sup>305</sup> Chang, *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880-1940*. See also Evelyn Hu-DeHart, "Immigrants to a Developing Society: The Chinese in Northern Mexico, 1875-1932," *Journal of Arizona History* 2 no.3, (Fall, 1980): 276-305.

<sup>306</sup> For example, in Peru, *Limeños* directed economic anxieties at Japanese communities leading to explosive anti-Japanese demonstrations in the late 1930s; the largest of which occurred in May of 1940. Rioters, stoked by the local press and the state, destroyed hundreds of Japanese businesses and killed ten Japanese. See Stephanie Moore, "The Japanese in Multi-Racial Peru, 1899-1942," PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2009. Lesser, *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil*. García, *Looking Like the Enemy*.

<sup>307</sup> See Moore, "The Japanese in Multi-Racial Peru, 1899-1942." Seiichi Higashide, *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). C. Harvey Gardiner, *Pawns in a Triangle of Hate: The Peruvian-Japanese and the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981).

<sup>308</sup> Moore, "The Japanese in Multi-Racial Peru, 1899-1942."

Santiago and particularly for the nitrate industry) and to provide the labor necessary to spur economic growth. Yet, most European arrivals were middle-class and settled in Chile’s urban economies, thus failing to furnish the nitrate zones with manual labor. Many European migrants arrived under subsidized Chilean state programs and even some private colonization arrangements that financed transportation and granted some land to migrants upon arrival. Few among these endured (such as German colonies in the southern city of Valdivia and Croats in the region of Magallanes near Antarctica) and most projects collapsed when migrants encountered false promises and inhospitable land.<sup>309</sup> In southern Chile, conflicting claims to and interpretations of property among dispossessed native Mapuche communities, the relative scarcity of Chilean settlers, and the presence of large estates—as well as the state’s relative weakness in the south—all discouraged large-scale European emigration there.<sup>310</sup>

Evidence suggests that Chile’s censuses dramatically under-recorded foreign-born populations, so foreigners never “officially” amounted to more than a few percent of Chile’s total population.<sup>311</sup> A snapshot of the 1920 census sheds light on the breakdown of foreigners residing in Chile.

Nationality	Population
Spaniards	25,962
Bolivians	15,552
Peruvians	12,991
Italians	12,358
Germans	8,950
Argentines	7,362

<sup>309</sup> On migration in Chile see, Damir Galaz-Mandakovic Fernández, “El escenario de la migración en Tocopilla en el devenir del siglo XX. Tres colectivos alóctonos y la fuga autóctona,” *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 29, (2012): 105-131. Marcela Tapia Ladino, “Frontera y migración en el norte de Chile a partir del análisis de los censos de población. Siglos XIX- XXI,” *Revista de Geografía Norte Grande* 53, (2012): 177-198. José Antonio González Pizarro, “Desde la influencia del darwinismo social hasta el imperio de los derechos humanos.”

<sup>310</sup> Historian Thomas Klubock estimates that 38,528 individuals moved to Chile between the 1850s and 1890s. Thomas Klubock, *La Frontera: Forests and Ecological Conflict in Chile’s Frontier Territory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.) See Chapter 1. See also María de los Ángeles Picone, “Legitimizing and Resisting Spatial Violence in Southern Chile (1890s-1910s),” *Historia Crítica* 82, (2021): 55-78.

<sup>311</sup> Chilean institutions such as the Bureau of Colonization and Immigration (which claimed that 34,319 foreigners entered Chile between 1895 and 1914) only counted immigrants arriving under subsidized state programs and thus significantly underreported the actual number of foreign residents. The national census in 1917 determined that people of foreign ancestry comprised merely 4% of Chile’s total population of 3,249,279. The 1920 census decreased the foreign-born population to 3.2%, or 120,346 among a population of 3,754,000. Source: “The Foreign Population of Chile as Taken from the Last Census in 1917,” State Department Microfilm Volume 4289 J Reel 28 File 1, accessed at the University of California, Berkeley. And William Collier (US Ambassador to Chile) to the Secretary of State, No. 700, August 31, 1925, State Department Microfilm Volume 4289 J Reel 28 File 2. Contains information submitted to Collier by Jose T. Aguero of Chile’s Bureau of Colonization and Immigration, accessed at the University of California, Berkeley. See also Alberto Edwards to Leo Chiozza Money, April 6, 1925, State Department Microfilm Volume 4289 J Reel 28 File 3, accessed at the University of California, Berkeley.

English	7,220
French	7,215
Turks	5,569
Austrians	2,927
Chinese	1,954
North Americans	1,908
Japanese	557
Total Chilean Population	3,754,000

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While yearning for western European immigrants, Chileans did make a place in their ideas about Chilean racial heritage and national culture for indigenous peoples.<sup>313</sup> Chilean intellectual Nicolás Palacios famously published to a wide readership in 1904 his polemic, *La raza Chilena*, which posited that not only Spanish but also lighter, Germanic Europeans *and* the mighty Arucanians (the sixteenth-century term for Mapuches) of the Chilean south collectively conceived modern Chilean mestizos.<sup>314</sup> Moreover, though the Chilean state had only just undertaken a violent and militarized conquest of Mapuche lands in the nineteenth century, Chileans proudly emphasized how Mapuches had successfully fended off the Spanish Empire, thus evincing that indigenous peoples in Chile were stronger than those elsewhere in Latin America who quickly succumbed to foreign intruders in the sixteenth century. A Chilean state pamphlet published in 1915 concisely conveyed this contradiction. It affirmed that “we find great homogeneity of race in Chile [where] the caucasian, or white, predominates.” But it also clarified that native peoples in Chile were quickly assimilating, “absolutely law-abiding, and are a vigorous, healthy, and hard-working people...in civilization they compare favorably with the best and most assimilated tribes of the United States.”<sup>315</sup> Alberto Edwards, Director of General Statistics of Chile, similarly explained in 1925 that “the distinction between whites and half-breeds that prevails in most of the Spanish American republics, is unknown in this country” and elaborated that the few examples of darker ethnic features among Chileans derived from the

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<sup>312</sup> This table is a snapshot of one with many more nationalities included in the original table. William Collier (US Ambassador to Chile) to the Secretary of State, No. 700, August 31, 1925, State Department Microfilm Volume 4289 J Reel 28 File 2. Contains information submitted to Collier by Jose T. Agüero of Chile’s Bureau of Colonization and Immigration, accessed at the University of California, Berkeley. See also Alberto Edwards to Leo Chiozza Money, April 6, 1925, State Department Microfilm Volume 4289 J Reel 28 File 3, accessed at the University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>313</sup> See Patience Schell, “Idols, Altars, Slippers, and Stockings: Heritage Debates and Displays in Nineteenth-Century Chile,” *Past and Present* 226 no. 10 (2015): 326-348.

<sup>314</sup> See Sarah Walsh, *The Religion of Life: Eugenics, Race, and Catholicism in Chile* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022).

<sup>315</sup> “Chile, Published by the Chilean government,” in *Zig-Zag*, 1915, 40. Accessed at The National Diet Library of Japan, Tokyo, Japan, Call No. 918.3-C536c .

Moorish heritage of Spaniards rather than any “negro” or “indian” blood.<sup>316</sup> So while Chilean elites frequently failed to settle on a single definition of *la raza Chilena*, their national creation tale nourished a regionally exceptional brand of mestizo nationalism in which Chileans emerged from both lighter Europeans and from native peoples far superior to their counterparts particularly in Peru, Bolivia, and Brazil.

Chileans also asserted that their ilk produced the ablest workers, particularly for the nitrate industry. The same Chilean government document from 1915 posited that in the harsh labor of the nitrate *pampas* “the Chilean laborer carries on this work in better conditions than any other.”<sup>317</sup> Nitrate engineer Alejandro Bertrand explained similarly in 1920 that Chileans excelled at nitrate labor because they were “as a rule, stronger, abler, and at a higher intellectual level” than the “Bolivian workmen [of] pure indian blood” or the “Peruvian [of] usually half-caste.”<sup>318</sup>

Despite Chilean aspirations towards white (or at least lighter-skinned) *mestizo* exceptionalism, Chile’s nitrate industry since the nineteenth century relied upon heterogenous cohorts of migrant *enganche* (meaning “to trick”) laborers coerced from across southern Chile, Bolivia, Peru, and Argentina. But by the early twentieth-century, the *enganche* labor system quickly deteriorated. The pursuit of higher wages in Chilean cities, mobilization against highly-exploitative labor practices on the *salitreras* (as discussed in Chapter 1), and anxieties that a volatile global nitrate market made for unreliable employment, collectively drained the Chilean north of its formerly steady supply of workers.

This exodus from the nitrate north, however, occurred right when the industry required more workers than ever. One Chilean official calculated that in 1880 that the nitrate industry required 4,000 workers to staff 40 nitrate *oficinas*, but by 1900 required 40,000 workers to staff 140 *oficinas*. Simultaneously, Chile’s supply of nitrate caliche ore proportionately dwindled from an estimated 50% of its natural content in 1880 to merely 20% in 1913, demanding increasing people and funding to work further and deeper in the Atacama Desert.<sup>319</sup> Furthermore, the predominantly British firms that produced nitrate hoped that the Chilean state would relocate agricultural workers from the south for labor in the nitrate north. Chilean voices countered that this would merely transfer the labor shortage to the agriculture industry and could subsequently sabotage Chile’s national agricultural subsistence. Chileans also suspected that few agricultural workers would willingly upend their livelihoods by moving across the country and accepting a lower salary to produce nitrate. Dialogue between foreign nitrate producers and Chilean officials also soured in the early 1910s when the foreign *oficinas* collectively financed an *engache*-type of labor recruitment strategy that recently poached 5,000 southern Chilean to the nitrate fields.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Edwards calculated that whites comprised 85% of the Chilean populace and only the remaining 15% possessed some discernible indigenous features. Alberto Edwards to Leo Chiozza Money, April 6, 1925, State Department Microfilm Volume 4289 J Reel 28 File 3, accessed at the University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>317</sup> “Chile, Published by the Chilean government,” in *Zig-Zag*, 1915, 222. Accessed at The National Diet Library of Japan, Tokyo, Japan, Call No. 918.3-C536c.

<sup>318</sup> Bertrand also noted that the harsh Atacama desert provided a very limited local population that could not alone source *oficinas* with sufficient labor. Alejandro Bertrand, *The Chilean Nitrate Industry: Technology and Economics* (Paris: Imprimerie de Vaugirard, 1920). Volume 5, Fondo Publicaciones de Salitre, Fondo Salitre, Archivo Nacional Histórico (hereafter ANH), 84.

<sup>319</sup> Alfredo Irrarázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” Oficio No. 15, January 20, 1913, Collection 463, Fondo Histórico, Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones de Chile (hereafter RREE Archive), 50, 53. And Alfredo Irrarázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 246, July 9, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>320</sup> Alfredo Irrarázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” 52.

This national labor question forced Chilean elites by the 1900s and 1910s to contemplate the introduction of Asian workers. Chilean Minister to Japan Alfredo Irarrázaval admitted in 1912 that “We unsuccessfully tried to subsidize a German or English producer to meet this challenge [but] neither the English nor the Germans could bring us laborers.” Migration from outside the country was needed, and “Japan is the only country in the world that can bring about the indispensable miracle for our finances and the future of our nitrate and to increase national production without depopulating our agricultural zone.”<sup>321</sup> Inviting Japanese labor in tightly segregated communities in the nitrate north would serve “our financial necessities today” while “conserving the unity of the races.” But doing so on Chilean terms remained top priority, Irarrázaval argued, in order to serve “our financial necessities today” while “conserving the unity of the races.”<sup>322</sup> Though terrified of losing their supposedly white nationhood, Chileans seemed out of options for the labor crisis.

So though unwilling to relinquish their hopes to preserve a white Chile, the nitrate labor shortage, and anxieties that foreign producers would outmaneuver the Chilean state forced Chilean elites to contemplate the introduction of Asian workers. The Chilean Minister to Japan, Alfredo Irarrázaval, directly admitted as much in 1912: “We unsuccessfully tried to subsidize a German or English producer to meet this challenge [but] neither the English nor the Germans could bring us laborers.” Migration from outside the country was needed, and “Japan is the only country in the world that can bring about the indispensable miracle for our finances and the future of our nitrate and to increase national production without depopulating our agricultural zone.”<sup>323</sup> Inviting Japanese labor in tightly segregated communities in the nitrate north would serve “our financial necessities today” while “conserving the unity of the races.”<sup>324</sup> Put differently, the nitrate labor crisis in the early twentieth-century forced a national conversation regarding Asian labor and, subsequently, about how Chileans defined their national community.

### **Resisting Chinese Immigration**

As this dilemma unfolded, Chileans almost unanimously opposed Chinese immigration, (unlike the notion of Japanese immigration which produced a multi-sided debate that I analyze later on). Chilean elites anxiously observed the consequences of Chinese migration to elsewhere the Americas (paying closest attention to Peru and Brazil) while appraising the notion for Chile. In their eyes, the previous generation of diseased and uncivilized Chinese immigrants had doomed the efforts to consolidate a national racial identity in Chile’s neighboring countries.

Since the late nineteenth-century, limited numbers of Chinese coolies working in guano labor around the Peruvian-Chilean border found their way into Chile. During the War of the Pacific (1879-1883) fought by Peru and Bolivia against Chile over nitrate and guano territories, many Chinese workers eagerly took up arms alongside invading Chilean troops against their former Peruvian oppressors and remained in Chile thereafter.<sup>325</sup> Chile’s national censuses

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<sup>321</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Chile en Londres (forwarded to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile), Oficio No. 283, August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD.

<sup>322</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” 56-57.

<sup>323</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Chile en Londres (forwarded to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile), Oficio No. 283, August 30, 1912, Fondo RREE, Volume 1692, ARNAD, 3376 pg. 17 (document is 3360-90)

<sup>324</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” pg. 56-57.

<sup>325</sup> Heidi Tinsman, “Rebel Coolies, Citizen Warriors, and Sworn Brothers: The Chinese Loyalty Oath and Alliance with Chile in the War of the Pacific,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 98, no.3 (2018): 439-469.

recorded Chinese residents in Chile as 1,164 in 1885, 1,920 in 1907, 1,954 in 1920, and 1,605 in 1930.<sup>326</sup> Chilean officials anxiously suspected that thousands of Chinese clandestinely entered northern Chile from Peru where hundreds of thousands of Chinese had migrated since the 1870s.<sup>327</sup> So while Chilean elites never exactly sought out Chinese immigrants and, indeed hoped to block their entry, workers, for one reason or another, maneuvered their way into Chile's various urban or nitrate economies.<sup>328</sup>

Chilean after 1900 thus tasked themselves with tightening Chile's traditionally loose immigration bureaucracy. Chilean officials gradually enacted legal restrictions framed as neutral bureaucratic policies, but which actually policed borders based on ideas about racial hierarchy, hygiene, and biology. These measures included the refusal to grant entry documents, confiscation of passports, mandatory quarantines for recently arrived vessels, and medical examinations that sometimes resulted in obligatory vaccinations or dismissal from the national territory.<sup>329</sup> For example, foreign ministry decree #597/340 enacted in April of 1914 required all immigrants to acquire a certificate of good health distributed (often arbitrarily) by Chilean diplomatic offices abroad before one traveled. Port authorities would then review the documents and further adjudicate immigrants' fitness for entering Chile.<sup>330</sup> In 1919, to cite another example, local policy-makers in Valparaíso intensified passport inspections for any foreigners arriving from China. Officials described the policy as consistent with "the practices of all civilized countries" to impede the introduction of any "bad elements," but the measures seemed punitively aimed at Chinese travelers.<sup>331</sup> The state hoped that equipping its port facilities with sanitary inspection offices staffed by doctors who would examine immigrants (particularly looking for symptoms of beriberi and trachoma) would further restrict the numbers of Chinese entering Chile.<sup>332</sup> In 1921, Chile limited the number of Chinese passports that its consulate in Hong Kong could distribute to 72 annually, considering that Chinese "immigration today is even less desirable seeing as how they move about the country."<sup>333</sup>

However, federal law emanating from Santiago often failed to evenly regulate and block Chinese immigration. Local port authorities therefore took matters into their own hands.<sup>334</sup> For example, Chilean diplomats in Asia often confiscated and misplaced passports of aspiring

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<sup>326</sup> González Pizarro, "Desde la influencia del darwinismo social hasta el imperio de los derechos humanos," 328.

<sup>327</sup> Legación de Chile en Hong Kong to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 40, April 28, 1925. Fondo RREE, Volume 2470, ARNAD.

<sup>328</sup> Though Chile gradually mounted legal and bureaucratic impediments to Chinese entry, many evaded these maneuvers by purchasing passages to Chile from ports administered by the US or Europeans who did not enforce Chilean policy. A few examples of these ports were British ports in Hong Kong and Singapore or US ports in the Philippines, or other European-owned ports in Indo-China, Macao, or Malaya. Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 22D Confidencial, July 28, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive, 17.

<sup>329</sup> Damir Galaz-Mandakovic Fernández, "El escenario de la migración en Tocopilla en el devenir del siglo XX."

<sup>330</sup> Conrado Ríos G. to Ministro del Interior de Chile, Oficio No. 133, August 15, 1916. Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, ARNAD.

<sup>331</sup> Intendencia de Valparaíso to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 1340, April 26, 1919. Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

<sup>332</sup> Alfonso Díaz Aguad, "Los consulados chilenos en oriente y su participación en el proceso de inmigración china al norte de Chile (1910-1929)."

<sup>333</sup> Víctor Vicente Robles, "Instrucciones dadas por el Ministro de Chile sobre inmigración," Oficio No. 79C Confidencial, October 20, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>334</sup> In some cases regional port officials accepted bribes in exchange for authorizing the entry of Chinese travelers. Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 36D Confidencial, October 20, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893. Archivo General Histórico, RREE Archive.

Chinese or Japanese travelers, sending confusion and frustration up the diplomatic chain of command. In other cases, local officials subjected some of the Chinese immigrants who *did* arrive to invasive, arbitrary, and confusing bureaucratic procedures. In April 1919, furthermore, Valparaíso authorities specifically requested that ship captains working for Allardice and Company—a shipper that employed primarily Chinese workers—prevent their crews from going ashore when docked in Chilean ports and police their own workers. A port official in Valparaíso grumbled that because federal immigration laws “were easily cheated and ineffective,” Chinese now “are invading our country in an alarming fashion...with all of their vice, illness, and improper practices.”<sup>335</sup>

Port officials also protested the difficulties of enforcing a somewhat vague federal sanitary code that migrants often successfully evaded and even mocked “because of their uselessness.”<sup>336</sup> Chilean Minister to Japan Francisco Rivas Vicuña assumed particular responsibility in the late 1910s for limiting “the Chinese colony to the minimum possible expansion” in order to “defend our race.” For example, he secretly arranged with Japanese shippers (though evidently unsuccessfully) to implement limited quotas for passages of Chinese travelers to Chile and to curb the practice of Chinese travelers purchasing transport to a final destination elsewhere in South America but with a stopover in Chile and simply remaining in Chile.<sup>337</sup> In 1921, another Chilean official in Tokyo complained that while the measures for blocking Chinese “were precise, though incomplete, and have not given great results,” instructions received from Santiago regarding how to restrict Japanese arrivals were “vague.”<sup>338</sup>

Chilean officials in Asia also worried about the health status of crews who worked for the steamship companies that conducted Pacific commerce. In 1908, for example, Chilean consul in Yokohama, Alfredo Viel Cavero, urgently penned the Captain of the Port of Iquique (a principal nitrate port) to warn him of two ships recently departed from Yokohama harboring at least twenty Chinese individuals who could disembark in Chile. Provided with no prior warning that would have enabled him to inspect the medical condition of the group, Cavero hoped that the port captain in Iquique could “take some measure to impede their entry” into Chile.<sup>339</sup> In May of 1909, Cavero complained to Santiago that Chinese routinely arrived in Chile onboard the ships of the Pacific Mail Company without receiving requisite medical inspection. Cavero reported a recent investigation by Chile’s Hong Kong consulate which revealed that among 120 Chinese maritime workers and travelers recently heading for Chile, 43 suffered from an “extremely infectious” trachoma.<sup>340</sup>

Japanese shipping companies such as Toyo Kisen Kaisha and Nippon Yusen Kaisha (the primary carriers for nitrate into Japan who employed many Chinese crews) not only shipped nitrate but maintained a far more profitable and robust business of transporting Asian migrants to

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<sup>335</sup> Intendencia de Valparaíso to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 1336, April 26, 1919. Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

<sup>336</sup> Conrado Rios G. to Ministro del Interior de Chile, Oficio No. 133, August 15, 1916. Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, ARNAD.

<sup>337</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 8D Confidencial, February 6, 1919, Fondo Histórico, Volume 760, RREE Archive.

<sup>338</sup> Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 22D Confidencial, July 28, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893, RREE Archive, 5, 11-14, 29.

<sup>339</sup> Alfredo Viel Cavero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 4, June 13, 1908. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

<sup>340</sup> Alfredo Viel Cavero to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 50, May 17, 1909. Fondo RREE, Volume 1324, ARNAD.

the Americas.<sup>341</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, these Japanese shippers little cared to enforce Chilean xenophobic laws nor did they want to curb their transport of aspiring migrants. Consequently, Chilean diplomats often suspected that these very Japanese shipping companies entrusted with Japanese-Chilean commerce routinely falsified ship logs and obscured the number and nationality of their crews to expedite shipping schedules and dodge Chilean bureaucratic obstacles. However, some Chilean elites also conceded that *some* Chinese or Japanese slipping through the cracks into Chile from Toyo ships was the tolerable, though not ideal, cost of doing nitrate business in Japan.<sup>342</sup> Chileans thus demanded that Toyo aggressively monitor its vessels to ensure that neither its primarily Chinese crew members or Japanese passengers found their way illegally into Chile while resupplying or conducting commerce in Chilean ports.<sup>343</sup>

Recent scholarship illustrates how, as the 1900s progressed, elites across the Americas acknowledged that explicitly racialized migration restrictions contradicted their supposedly liberal progressive political systems.<sup>344</sup> Consequently, elites assembled immigration bureaucracies that in rhetoric possessed no racialized animosities but in practice policed borders based on race. Chilean elites followed the same course by the 1920s when what I have described as these vague and uneven immigration barriers morphed into firmer policies aimed directly at impeding Chinese entries. Indeed, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay signed in 1920 a collective treaty requiring shipping companies and port authorities to prohibit the arrival of immigrants with disease, mental illness, criminality, old age, or supposedly violent communist impulses. The transnational convention further obliged host country governments to previously authorize immigrant work contracts, rather than permitting foreign firms and shippers to autonomously contract and transport immigrants.<sup>345</sup>

Within Chile, specifically, moreover, the congress enacted residency laws (such as Law #344 in 1919 and laws #3446 and #4871 in 1930) that added new layers of Chilean gatekeeping against Asian entry. Chile also set immigration quotas in the 1920s that were particularly narrow for Chinese.<sup>346</sup> While these laws theoretically targeted anyone with a criminal record, known ambitions to disturb the social order, or those unable to work, and required all foreigners to register themselves with the state upon entry, Chilean port authorities often selectively enforced them against Chinese immigrants.

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<sup>341</sup> Toyo's expanding routes to Chile produced other unforeseen headaches for Chilean officials. For example, Chilean authorities struggled to halt Toyo crews from informally selling Asian goods and crafts to eager Chilean consumers while docked in nitrate ports. Evidently, the small peddling of Japanese artisanry became a popular attraction in the northern ports and not only Chilean consumers but also port authorities partook in and turned a blind eye to what federal officials saw as contraband commerce. Pedro Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 36D, August 11, 1917, Fondo RREE, Volume 2144, ARNAD.

<sup>342</sup> Alfonso Díaz Aguad, "Los consulados chilenos en oriente y su participación en el proceso de inmigración china al norte de Chile (1910-1929)," 65.

<sup>343</sup> José Antonio González Pizarro, "Desde la influencia del darwinismo social hasta el imperio de los derechos humanos," 336.

<sup>344</sup> Here I take a cue from David Scott Fitzgerald and David Cook-Martin, *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>345</sup> "Establecimiento de una Legislación Uniforme Sobre Inmigración," 1922, Fondo RREE, Volume 2247, ARNAD.

<sup>346</sup> Text of "Ley Numero 3,446," 1919, Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD. See also "Ley de Residencia #3446" and "Ley #4871," 1930, Fondo RREE, Volume 2886, ARNAD.

## Debating Japanese Labor

While negative opinions on Chinese immigrants seemed almost unanimous, the prospect of resolving Chilean labor shortages with Japanese workers provoked a more nuanced discussion. Chileans on both sides of the Asian labor debate closely tracked the initial Chinese, and later Japanese, arrivals elsewhere in the Americas and agreed nervously that Chile was inevitably next in line to receive large scale Japanese immigration. They also agreed that their neighbors had erred by failing to preemptively prevent or regulate Japanese immigration before it was too late. Consequently, Chile possessed limited time in which to learn from their neighbors' mistakes and take preemptive precautionary measures to either fully guard against immigration *or* aggressively regulate, segregate, profit from, and ultimately repatriate any Japanese immigrant workers. Irarrázaval concisely summarized Chile's conundrum in 1912: "There is no other choice but to look in Asia for the arms that we lack; and here there is no greater dilemma than selecting between Japanese or Chinese."<sup>347</sup> This section of the chapter examines Chileans' debates over the prospect of seemingly imminent and large-scale Japanese immigration to Chile.

Verifying the Japanese population in Chile remains challenging. Chilean national censuses recorded 51 Japanese residents in 1885, 209 in 1907, 557 in 1920, 670 in 1930, and 948 by 1940.<sup>348</sup> Census data suggests that young Japanese men comprised the vast majority of early arrivals, and records identify only 5 Japanese women in 1907, 44 in 1920, 116 by 1930, and 257 by 1940. Early in the century, the majority of Japanese lived in the northern nitrate provinces of Antofagasta and Tarapacá but by 1940 the largest concentration of approximately 308 individuals resided in Santiago.<sup>349</sup> The Japanese Minister to Chile in 1927 reported that among the Japanese immigrant population of 500 in 1927, 40% worked as barbers, 30% as agricultural laborers, and the remainder worked as merchants.<sup>350</sup> Comparatively, Japanese immigrants in Peru by 1924 numbered about 35,000 within a total Peruvian population of approximately 5 million.<sup>351</sup>

Because the parastatal networks that financed Japanese migration to elsewhere in the Americas did not exist for Chile, the prohibitively high costs of travel restricted the demographics of Japanese arrivals in Chile to wealthier families, invitees of Japanese already living in Chile, ship crews, and the evidently many who clandestinely entered and remained in Chile after arriving first in Bolivia or Peru. Records indicate that Japanese residing in Chilean urban economies in Santiago or in the northern nitrate ports predominantly worked as barbers, merchants, in service labor, in other salary work, and in agriculture. There is no evidence that Japanese immigrants really took on mining labor.<sup>352</sup> Also unlike the movement of Japanese to

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<sup>347</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, "Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América," 53.

<sup>348</sup> González Pizarro, "Desde la influencia del darwinismo social hasta el imperio de los derechos humanos," 328. María Teresa Ferrando Hanus, *Al otro lado del Pacífico. Japoneses en Chile 1900-1960* (Santiago, Chile: Sociedad Japonesa de Beneficencia, 2004). Anexo 3 Tabla 1 on pg. 315 contains a breakdown of the 1920 census figures.

<sup>349</sup> María Teresa Ferrando Hanus, *Al otro lado del Pacífico*.

<sup>350</sup> *The Japan Advertiser*, "Shinyo Maru Brings Chilean Envoy Back," November 12, 1927, Anexo al Oficio No. 119, Fondo RREE, Volume 2622, ARNAD,

<sup>351</sup> E.R. Dickover (US Consul in Kobe) to Secretary of State, February 26, 1924, State Department Microfilm Volume 15773 J Reel 23 File 4, accessed at the University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>352</sup> Ariel Takeda, Naomi Hirose, María Teresa de Senda, "Los Inmigrantes Japoneses y los Nikkei Chilenos: Perspectiva General Histórica," Sociedad Japonesa de Bienficiencia, Proyecto Internacional Investigación Nikkei, Comisión PIIN-Chile, 2000. Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan.

Peru or Brazil where larger communities and the emigration of families enabled the rise of cloistered communities, the dearth of Japanese women in Chile entailed that many Japanese men married Chilean women and more quickly integrated into Chilean society. So while Japanese children born elsewhere in South America were raised with Japanese customs, language, and schools, the few Japanese-Chilean couples that there were raised children through a philosophy of “if they are going to live in Chile, let them be Chilean.” Also unlike institutionalized migration patterns to elsewhere that deliberately selected emigrants from particular regions in Japan, the Japanese in Chile came all but three prefectures in Japan.<sup>353</sup>

Nevertheless, discussions surrounding the potential for massive Japanese immigration far outsized the miniscule minority of the actual Japanese population in Chile. Many Chileans evaluated the notion of Japanese immigration directly against their stereotypes of Chinese as they hoped to preserve Chile’s regionally exceptional biological and cultural fiber. Senator Luis Devoto emphatically declared in 1906 that “this immigration, not only of Chinese, which is absolutely unacceptable, but also of Japanese who have much contact with them, would be prejudicial for the country.”<sup>354</sup> Other institutions such as Chile’s National Agricultural Society likewise sided with the xenophobic skepticism of many Chilean senators. One of its officials affirmed in 1906 that, when it came to “mixing blood, habits, ideas, and tendencies, whether they are Chinese or Japanese, the result would be the same: they are the yellow race and they have physical disadvantages and moral aberrations.”<sup>355</sup> Another National Agricultural Society representative two years later, while applauding efforts to sell nitrate in Japan, maintained that any correlating migration would present “a very serious menace to the republics of South America.”<sup>356</sup> A Chilean report written from Japan in 1924 concluded: “the danger of yellow immigration whose inferior racial qualities are manifest and constitute a threat for countries whose ethnic and ideological characteristic are diametrically opposite, especially from those of the Japanese people.”<sup>357</sup> One official in Santiago’s foreign ministry in 1928 fretted over Japanese firms’ information gathering campaigns to study Chile as an emigration destination, commenting that such immigration streams would harm Chile: “The good qualities that define this people” were not enough to outweigh the “true danger that Japanese emigration in great numbers represents for Chile.”<sup>358</sup> For these xenophobic skeptics, perceived admirable Japanese traits still did not warrant immigration and there was thus no distinction to be drawn between Japanese and Chinese immigration.

Influential politician and journalist, Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, in 1909 elevated the threat of Japanese immigration to the level of Chilean sovereignty. In alignment with his overarching contention that foreign “conquest” bore responsibility for Chilean underdevelopment (discussed in the previous chapter), and already bitter that “the dregs of Europe” and the Chinese, despite facing exclusion in other nations, “find wide open the doors to

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<sup>353</sup> *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas: An Illustrated History of the Nikkei*, ed. Akemi Kikumia-Yano (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 177, 179

<sup>354</sup> Sesiones del Congreso Nacional, Cámara de Senadores de Chile, Sesión 13a Extraordinaria, 15 de noviembre de 1906, 352. Quoted in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 223, footnote 109.

<sup>355</sup> Boletín de la Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura de Chile, Volumen XXXVII, No. 32, Santiago, 1 de diciembre de 1906, 843. Quoted in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 227, footnote 119.

<sup>356</sup> Boletín de la Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura de Chile, Volumen XXXIX, No. 9, Santiago, 15 de diciembre de 1908, 538. Quoted in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 234, footnote 159.

<sup>357</sup> Chilean Legation in Japan to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 35, Confidencial N0. 4, October 30, 1924, Fondo Histórico, Volume 986, RREE Archive.

<sup>358</sup> N. Novoa Valdés to Consul General de Chile en el Japón, Oficio No. 8586, November 2, 1928, Fondo RREE, Volume 2701, ARNAD.

our house,” Pinochet interpreted Japanese colonization as nothing other than an invitation for a Japanese takeover of Chile:

Japanese envoys have come to study our climate and soil and, leaving with nothing less than the best impression and having been encouraged by us, now are preparing to send us Japanese that will not delay in forming a *Shin Nihon* [a new Japan] in Chile that could not triumph in California. We will thereafter have real Japanese states on our soil whose fatal consequences we will come to see only once it is too late...The future battle in Chile will not be between Chileans and foreign usurpers who come to take over our soil, but between usurpers and others usurpers because the few of us Chileans who remain, poor and abandoned by our government, will be easily suffocated and extinguished.<sup>359</sup>

He further lambasted the expansionary appetite of the Japanese empire: “The nation [Japan] that is hungry for expansion and economic conquests wants to bring the sphere of its dominion and nationality into the heart of other nations. It wants to scatter its citizens across the globe and keep all of them as loyal subjects who will fight on foreign shores against other races and civilizations for the glory and benefit of their distant fatherland.” Pinochet thus rejected his contemporaries’ interest in immigration compelled by labor shortages and “arguments about our scarce population.” He also pointed to the recent precedent of Japanese emigration to the US to argue that while Japanese made sober, diligent, and reliable workers, they refused to assimilate and remained exclusively loyal to the Japanese state.<sup>360</sup>

Other Chilean diplomats and politicians, however, argued the opposite. Some posited that Japanese labor migration to the nitrate north, geographically segregated from the majority of Chile’s urban central population, would both alleviate the nitrate labor problem and permit Chile to channel its few European migrants to the cities where mixing with Chileans seemed more palatable. Senator Darío Sánchez Mansenlli (who recently visited Japan on a Japanese ship loaded with nitrate) observed: “Japanese workers are of the same level as any others and they would be excellent for our mineral mines in the north, just as the Spanish and Italians could serve us in agricultural labor in the center and south of the Republic.”<sup>361</sup> Senator Ramón Subercaseaux outlined another moderate argument, suggesting that “Japanese have demonstrated that they are reliable and hard workers. How could one argue therefore that they are of a degenerate and inferior race?...We should not, therefore, focus on race. What we should look for are hard workers and men of action, regardless of where they come from.”<sup>362</sup> For Subercaseaux, urgent national interests and the potential collective benefits of contracting Japanese laborers outweighed racial anxieties. Arturo Larraín, Chile’s consul in Yokohama, summarized this perspective in 1921: “we must restrict immigration however possible, particularly that of the Chinese, who generally bring us bad customs and a racial danger. With respect to Japanese immigration, if it was not for the danger of racial mixing, it would be very useful for the country.

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<sup>359</sup> Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, *La conquista de Chile en el siglo XX* (Santiago: Imp. Litografía y Encuadernación “La Ilustración, 1909), 74.

<sup>360</sup> Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, *La conquista de Chile en el siglo XX*, 21-30, 36-37, 72-75.

<sup>361</sup> Sesiones del Congreso Nacional, Cámara de Senadores de Chile, Sesión 13a Extraordinaria, 15 de noviembre de 1906, 350. Quoted in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 222, footnote 104.

<sup>362</sup> Sesiones del Congreso Nacional, Cámara de Senadores de Chile, Sesión 13a Extraordinaria, 15 de noviembre de 1906, 356-57. Quoted in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 224, footnote 112.

They are a laborious people of good customs who would in no way harm the country. To the contrary, they could bring unknown industries to Chile, especially their small industries.”<sup>363</sup>

Some Chilean diplomat-businessmen assigned to expand nitrate commerce in Japan (the actors to whom I refer as Pacific visionaries) outright endorsed potentially large-scale Japanese immigration to Chile. Chilean consul in Yokohama, Angel C. Espejo, wrote to the director of the Japanese shipper, Naigai Boyeki Goshi Kaisha, in 1903 that qualities of reliability, vitality, and commitment all distinguished Japanese as “an excellent type of colonist...[who] will not only be an important factor in the activity of [Japan], but once settled in another country, his character, intelligence, and work habits make him equally useful in a foreign society.” Espejo elaborated that Japanese seemed perfectly primed to power nitrate production, unlike their unreliable European counterparts. Espejo elaborated: “What we need is colonization in the strictest sense of the word—or, better said, perfectly regimented colonies whether they are agricultural, industrial, or mining.” Espejo cited figures to illustrate the much higher wages Japanese would earn in Chile and even outlined a temporary colonization system, under Chile’s relatively open immigration laws, for Chile to receive 100,000 Japanese immigrants over the next decade institutionalized with ten-year labor contracts.<sup>364</sup>

Another Pacific visionary, the former Chilean Minister to Japan, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, similarly urged his contemporaries to relinquish any fears of Japanese emigration. He asserted only those who could not grasp the merits of Japanese society feared “the invasion of the western Pacific.” Indeed, he asserted that the expansion of the Japanese nation and people was analogous to the exploratory impulses that defined human history and differed little from the Iberians who ventured to explore the Americas or their nomadic ancestors who gradually populated Europe. “Far from being rejected, [Japanese immigration] should be stimulated by those who wish to assimilate people who are sober, modest, hard-working, economical, and disciplined.” Rivas Vicuña concluded the Japanese workers could generate “elsewhere the same wealth he has brought to his own territory.”<sup>365</sup>

This is not to say that advocates of the Pacific vision and Japanese labor (including the aforementioned Rivas) harbored no discriminatory views. Indeed, few could stomach the prospect of miscegenation any better than their more explicitly xenophobic colleagues. The Chilean Minister to Japan, Víctor Vicente Robles, in 1921, identified Japanese immigration as “a problem without solution... not suitable in general for America and especially not for Chile.” Centrally, Robles claimed that Japanese would forever refuse to assimilate into “white societies,” and that miscegenation with unassimilable Japanese (and Chinese, even less so) would certainly “break the admirable racial unity of our nation.”<sup>366</sup>

So while Pacific visionaries themselves even voiced xenophobic concerns, many also grasped the relationship between potential immigration and promising commercial relations with Japan. In December of 1906, for example, Javier Larraín Irarrázaval, a former Chilean official in Japan, gave a lengthy interview to the Valparaíso periodical, *La Unión*, that outlined this

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<sup>363</sup> Arturo Larraín Lecaros to Víctor Vicente Robles, “Informe sobre emigración China,” Oficio No. 32 Confidencial, June 10, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893, RREE Archive, 7

<sup>364</sup> Angel C. Espejo to Shinbey Yagi, April 27, 1903. Appendix, Documento No. 7, in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, 318. Original citation: Archivo Nacional, Fondo Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección Consular. Correspondencia del Consulado General de Chile en Japón, China, y Filipinas, 1899-1906. Volumen 870.

<sup>365</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña, *El verdadero Japón (apuntes para la monografía de un gran pueblo): Las fuerzas internas del Imperio* (Tokio: Katsuo Takahashi, 1921), 225.

<sup>366</sup> Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 22D Confidencial, July 28, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893, RREE Archive, 1-2.

hypocritical tension between xenophobia and the Pacific vision. Larraín detailed how discipline in agriculture and pisciculture illustrated that “as settlers [Japanese] are undoubtedly the best in the world.” The article elaborated: “Mr. Larraín declared the great benefit offered by maintaining good relations with Japan, which is predicted to become a great market for nitrate.” Yet, Larraín also summarized how Japanese “sincerely believe that they belong to the most intelligent and wise race on earth...giving rise to contempt for all things foreign.” He worried that should the “500,000” immigrants that Japan hoped to distribute across South America find any dissatisfaction with their work conditions, they were liable to revolt. Larraín concluded: “If the government or private interests succeed in bringing Japanese immigrants, there will come a day when inevitable conflicts, aside from creating serious international complications, will cause us to lose this most convenient and advantageous of markets.” Larraín’s interview in *La Unión* reveals the paralyzing tangle of commercial, racial, and labor interests that enticed Chilean nation-builders to extend relations with Japan, but cautioned them from throwing open their borders to Japanese colonies.<sup>367</sup>

Though completely disagreeing on the appropriate course of action, Chileans on both sides of the Japanese immigration debate remained convinced for decades that massive Japanese immigration was always imminent. Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio Huneeus Gana outlined this precise anxiety in 1912: “I have always thought that if the United States could not keep the Japanese out, the less chance we would have. It would convenience us, therefore, to regulate the inevitable and ensure that the immigration that comes to Chile is healthy and useful.” He instructed his diplomats in Japan to neither “encourage or resist it. When it comes, oversee it.”<sup>368</sup> Chilean analyses of Japanese arable land scarcity and overpopulation, initially conducted to appraise Japan as a market for nitrate fertilizer, only reinforced their forecasts that Japanese arrivals to Chile were inevitable.<sup>369</sup> One such report from 1928 stated that Japan’s “sterile” soils simply could not feed a burgeoning population of 80 million.<sup>370</sup> Another Chilean stationed in Japan, furthermore, worried that despite the “heavy Japanese immigration to South America in preparation,” Chileans were woefully unprepared to “impede either one or a thousand Japanese citizens from going to Chile...the time to enact new measures to restrict immigration [is] precisely now because it is certain that within a few short years, Asiatic emigration will increase.”<sup>371</sup> In 1928, Chilean Charge d’Affaires in Japan C. Alvarez de la Rivera warned that because Peru and Brazil “have found themselves relatively saturated with sons of this Empire, Japanese rulers now are searching for new countries...among which they principally point out

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<sup>367</sup> *La Unión*, Valparaíso, Martes 11 de diciembre de 1906, No. 6.634, pg. 4. Appendix, Documento No. 13, in Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón*, pg. 333.

<sup>368</sup> Antonio Huneeus, Ministro de Relaciones, Culto, y Colonización, to Alfredo Irarrázaval, October 26, 1912. Code B1487862. Accessed at Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.

<sup>369</sup> While the anxieties and conversations pertaining to Japanese immigration focused on firstly nitrate labor, some Chileans beginning in the 1910s also promoted the establishment of Japanese colonies in the sparsely populated (if ignoring the indigenous Mapuche population) Chilean south, known as *La Frontera*. There, they could develop the land and advance the pisciculture and forestry industries in which Chilean officials believed Japanese to excel and possess inherent experience. Had they materialized, Japanese colonies in *La Frontera* would have more closely resembled the settlement patterns of Japanese elsewhere in Latin America, such as in the Brazilian Amazon or Peruvian cotton and sugar valleys. Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” 37.

<sup>370</sup> C. Alvarez de la Rivera to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 73, October 2, 1928, Fondo RREE, Volume 2693, ARNAD.

<sup>371</sup> Víctor Vicente Robles to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 22D Confidencial, July 28, 1921, Fondo Histórico, Volume 893, RREE Archive, 12, 20.

the Republics of Argentina and Chile.”<sup>372</sup> Chileans thus hoped that it was not yet too late for Chile to regulate or restrict the looming arrival of Japanese.

Japanese actors simultaneously hoped that emigration to Chile could offer reliable avenues for colonization and commerce.<sup>373</sup> In 1903, Terutake Hinata, Vice-President of the Transoceanic Emigration Company volunteered his firm to lead his forecasted arrival of 250,000 Japanese to Chile over the next decade.<sup>374</sup> Japanese officials and firms also predicted in 1906 that “weak” Latin American governments could not, in the words of Vice-President of Toyo Kisen Kaisha, Mr. Tsukahara, in 1906 “refuse with any energy the arrival of Japanese immigrants.”<sup>375</sup> Firms such as the Kaigai Kogyo Kaisha (International Development Company) often directly visited and petitioned Chile’s legations in Japan for information on immigration policy and conditions. Former Japanese Minister to Chile Eki Hioki claimed in the *Ji-Ji Shimpō* in 1914 that though severe labor shortages and extensive natural resources indicated that “the business of importing capital and workers [from Japan to Chile and South America] would no doubt bring great gains.” South America was thus not only “a land of colonization” but “a land of colonization with companies.” In arguing that “capital should always accompany labor,” Hioki outlined how the Japanese state linked emigration to commerce administered by Japanese firms themselves.<sup>376</sup>

Ironically, while some Chileans pointed to their nation’s white exceptionalism as indicating why Asian laborers were incompatible for mixing with Chileans, Japanese officials repurposed the same rhetoric to target Chile as a destination for its emigrants. Zogi Amari, former Japanese diplomat in Peru and Chile, encouraged his compatriots in May of 1931 to fix some well-deserved attention on Chile: “Of the South American countries Chile and Argentina were the only ones that were saved from mixing with blacks. Many Anglo-Saxon people live in Chile, contributing to Chileans being very healthy, intelligent, alive, agile, brave, and of good character. They are ingenious and have something of an English ‘spirit.’”<sup>377</sup> Congressman and journalist, Kaju Nakamura, likewise affirmed that Chileans “very much resemble the Japanese people,” and concluded that “There is much very suitable Japanese business to be done in Chile... Japanese capital and fisherman emigrants are desired in Chile.” He also linked Chileans and Japanese in terms of their regional superiority and likened Chinese to Peruvians as their regionally inferior counterparts.<sup>378</sup> Secretary of Japan’s Foreign Ministry, Masamoto Kitada, likewise noted that “the intellectual development of [the South American countries] is not

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<sup>372</sup> C. Alvarez de la Rivera to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 22, March 28, 1928, Fondo RREE, Volume 2693, ARNAD.

<sup>373</sup> As historian Toake Endoh posits: “the state sought to expand the scope of the nation-state beyond its territorial borders via a migration-colonization strategy. In this progressive (in the imperialist sense) scheme, emigrants were no longer unproductive or undisciplined masses but useful and dutiful agents of colonial development and a surrogate in Japan’s expansionist overtures.” Endoh, *Exporting Japan*, 7-8.

<sup>374</sup> Jara Fernández, *Chile y el Imperio Japón, 1897-1911*, 176-177.

<sup>375</sup> Alfredo Irrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, “Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América,” 25-27.

<sup>376</sup> Francisco Herboso to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Oficio No. 6, July 29, 1914. Anexo includes translation of “The Arrival of Minister Hioki,” *Ji-Ji Shimpō*, July 21, 1914, Fondo Histórico, Volume 472A, RREE Archive.

<sup>377</sup> “Resumen de la Conferencia del Sr. Zogi Amari en la Sala de espectáculos de “Nichi-Nichi de Tokio,” dada el 19 de Mayo de 1931, Fondo RREE, Volume 3040, ARNAD.

<sup>378</sup> Enrique Gallardo Nieto to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Oficio No. 35, May 27, 1931. Anexo to this oficio includes translations of various newspaper articles. “Necesidad de estrechar las relaciones con Chile,” por el Diputado Kaju Nakamura, Director de la Revista.

inferior to European countries.”<sup>379</sup> As the authors of their own Japanese racial superiority in East Asia, Japanese officials thus utilized the rhetoric of Chilean racial exceptionalism to reinforce the allure of Chile as a worthy site for emigration.

These charged debates, discourses, and conversations over imminent or potential large-scale Japanese migration to Chile persisted until Chile enacted a firm legal ban on Japanese immigration in April 1936.<sup>380</sup> The aforementioned cocktail of interest, xenophobia, and ambivalence gave way by 1936 to firm restrictions. Growing competition in a Chilean job market narrowed by the Great Depression’s hamstringing of Chile’s export sector also impaired the arguments for Japanese labor. Thereafter, even when Japanese officials attempted to leverage Chilean commercial ambitions in Japan with their own emigration agenda, it became clear that large-scale Japanese emigration to Chile would not materialize.

By the onset of the Second World War in the 1940s, even the most vocal Pacific visionaries turned against Japanese immigration. Chilean Minister Armando Labra Carvajal, for instance, warned from Tokyo in 1943 that if the Allies did not “squash” the “latent invasion” and of Japanese imperialist fanaticism, its emigrants abroad would “debilitate western civilization” after the war.” He concluded that “Either way, asiatic migration to Chile needs to be stopped at the roots...Japan with its policy of penetration, absorption, and ‘protection’ is the virus that Japan injects into nations to corrode them, drain their blood, and poison them. I place all of my patriotism, my faith in diplomatic life, and in the public administration of my country...behind my plea to the governors of my fatherland to impede by every means Japanese immigration, to place an iron wall to the asiatic invasion!”<sup>381</sup> Though tardy, Chile finally confirmed to the Latin American trend in the 1930s and 1940s of excluding and harassing Japanese residents.<sup>382</sup>

### Conclusion

Chile’s anti-Japanese exclusion law of 1936 culminated decades of debate over Japanese labor. Though massive Japanese immigration did not materialize as many had promoted, feared, or predicted, the debate on the topic illustrates the centrality of race and Chilean racial exceptionalism in Chilean nation-building. Most scholarship confines Latin American, and in particular Chilean, nation-building to a process that was determined nearly exclusively by factors at home. But this chapter indicates that considering how Chileans positioned themselves within the broader world and Pacific was critical for defining the terms of Chilean nationhood.

Ultimately, a hypocritical and paralyzing mixture of opportunism, aspiration, xenophobia, and racial anxieties collectively precluded Chile from following the US, Brazilian, and Peruvian paths of turning to Japanese immigration. Chile thus offers a unique case study where, in the end, racial anxieties inspired actors to oppose what very likely could have dramatically boosted the sputtering nitrate industry. Yet, the debate over the Pacific vision and

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<sup>379</sup> Enrique Gallardo Nieto to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Oficio No. 35, May 27, 1931. Anexo to this oficio includes translations of various newspaper articles. “Más atención con Sudamérica Occidental,” por Masamoto Kitada, Secretario en el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores Director de la Revista.

<sup>380</sup> Suegoro Sone (of the Japanese Legation in Chile) to Carlos de la Barra, January 29, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3940, ARNAD.

<sup>381</sup> Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 52.

<sup>382</sup> After terminating relations with Japan, the Chilean state evidently temporarily exiled various Japanese individuals and families, seized assets, and forced Japanese businesses to close. Mauricio Paredes Venegas, *La olvidada guerra contra Japón. Secretos diplomáticos y víctimas invisibles durante la segunda Guerra mundial en Chile* (Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones, 2022)

Japanese migration, which played out privately among officials and publicly in the press did not simply pit optimistic Chilean Japanophiles against xenophobic, inflexible Chilean nationalists along only binary lines. Rather, while conflicting on the most fragile issues such as racial mixing, many Chileans agreed on the power and potential utility of Japan for commerce. And moreover, examining the debates over Asian labor reveals how race, and not only class, shaped Chileans' nation-building processes and self-definition. Though Chinese or Japanese never emigrated to Chile in numbers comparable to elsewhere, the prospect of Asian immigration deeply shaped how Chileans discussed their national racial stock and regional positionality.

This chapter also illustrates how the Pacific vision was complicated by the explosive topic of miscegenation and migration. Because the Japanese who arrived in Chile did so aboard primarily Japanese steamships (the same companies that shipped nitrate to Japan), even the very means of transporting migrants was intertwined with nitrate infrastructure. Thus, the inherent collaborative ambition, urgency, and contradictions of Chilean-Japanese relations that grounded the Pacific vision in its commercial element applied also to Chileans' discussion of Japanese labor migration.

## Chapter 4: The Pacific Vision and the Social Relations of Chile's Nitrate Ports

In August of 1916, the *Seminario Bonaerense* published a headline: “A Grave Transcendental Incident, Blasphemy Committed by the Chilean Authorities Against the Japanese, Atrocious Police and Intolerable Judges, Demands for Intervention from Our Representative.” The article chronicled the story of Japanese mariners operating a nitrate ship that recently returned to Yokohama from Mejillones, Chile (near Antofagasta) where they had suffered “atrocities by the Chilean authorities.” Allegedly, while docked in the Chilean port to load nitrate and reprovision, some of the Japanese crew (namely their chief engineer, Shigekichi Ishikawa, and eleven of the ship’s stokers) were walking about the streets after consuming beer in a local bar. Seemingly out of nowhere, a horse-mounted police officer brandishing his saber advanced on the group and sliced a nearly five-inch wound into Ishikawa’s head. Additional officers quickly and aggressively assaulted and apprehended three other Japanese sailors among the scattering group. The escaping crew members convened with their captain, Seiichi Tanaka, and petitioned Chilean authorities for atonement and compensation for the harms committed. The Chilean police refused and instead demanded payment of 80 pesos for the release of the detained Japanese sailors. Though outraged at the injustice, Captain Tanaka evidently elected to simply pay the fine and depart for Yokohama immediately. The crew later urged Japanese “diplomatic authorities take measures about this matter” and to pursue retributions from Santiago, which ultimately sparked a delicate controversy among Chilean and Japanese diplomats.<sup>383</sup>

The incomplete record does not indicate how this incident ended. But it sheds light on the nature of interactions between Japanese individuals and local authorities that played out across Chile’s nitrate ports once Japanese ships began arriving with greater frequency in the early 1900s. This Japanese ship crew only temporarily docked in Chile to carry out precisely the commercial purpose for which they had been commissioned by Japanese and Chilean diplomats and businessmen (that is, transporting nitrate to Japan). Yet, unlike their counterparts in business or government spheres, local Chileans felt no sense of shared purpose or appreciation for the appearance of Japanese actors on Chilean streets. So while optimistic visions for mutual profits and intertwined notions of anti-Anglo-American nation-building defined Chilean-Japanese relations within elite commercial and government circles, xenophobia, violence, and police corruption proliferated on the ground as Japanese businesses, workers, and sailors clashed with local Chilean police, and port authorities on an accelerating basis throughout the nitrate north.

Through a series of snapshots and case studies, this chapter tells a social and local history of the Pacific vision and of Chilean international relations. It examines how the local interactions between Chilean police, port, and judicial authorities and Japanese travelers related to and impacted the development of the Pacific vision at the highest levels. I argue that the very same diplomatic and commercial infrastructure for nitrate commerce that elites had spent years constructing inadvertently became both an accelerant for conflict between Japanese and Chileans *and* a medium through which Japanese petitioned for protection and retributions committed against them by local authorities. Indeed, the Japanese-Chilean diplomatic record is full of Japanese diplomats assisting mariners and immigrants to resolve bureaucratic matters, render justice for crimes, or repatriate remains and assets.

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<sup>383</sup> “Memorandum,” Traducción a pie de letras de un artículo aparecido en *El Seminario Bonaerense*, No. 48, año 11, 12 de agosto de 1916, Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, Archivo Nacional de la Administración (hereafter ARNAD).

Analyzing the confusion and tension among elite Pacific visionaries in Santiago or Tokyo and local Chilean authorities, also reveals another important insight about Chilean nation-building in this era: that Santiago officials failed to curb local abuses against Japanese actors—as demanded by the Japanese state—and reduce the autonomy of regional port and judicial authorities illustrates the uneven and polarized project to politically centralize the nation and define the terms of Chilean nationhood. From the late nineteenth-century and onwards, Chile transitioned from administratively fragmented country in which bustling port cities such as Valparaíso and across the nitrate north exceeded the capital in Santiago in commercial activity and importance, to an aggressively centralized state firmly headquartered in Santiago. The tensions and confusion dividing Chileans in the center and the periphery as they sorted out how to treat Japanese arrivals in Chile thus mirrored the broader contest over power and autonomy between Santiago and other regions. In other words, this chapter tells together the stories of local social relations, diplomatic relations, and the ongoing process of Chile's national assimilation and nation-building.

Finally, I posit that what emerges from the record of the many confused and often abrasive local interactions between Japanese and Chilean actors are completely divergent and mutually unintelligible understandings of race, nation, and geopolitical hierarchy. Japanese traveled under the impression that their formidable empire lent them an elevated social and racial position while abroad. Outrage and bewilderment ensued when Japanese travelers encountered in Chile xenophobic assumptions that whiter, western Chileans were more civilized than Japanese. Indeed, port authorities often confused Japanese for Chinese and derided any Asian traveler under deliberately insulting categories such as “oriental” or “chino.” Many Chileans also ridiculed travelers' propositions that being Japanese entitled them privileged treatment.

### **Violence, Confusion, and Corruption**

Composed of a small Chilean and foreign (mostly British) elite and a very diverse population of workers and merchants, Chilean nitrate port cities were aggressively heterogenous, rough, and socially combustible places from the mid-nineteenth century and onwards. As described in the previous chapter, *enganche* labor contracting since the mid-nineteenth century had populated the nitrate north with a transient mixture of South American labor migrants. The national and racial heterogeneity of the *enganche* population stoked attitudes that Chilean cities in the center of the country possessed whiter, more developed residents while darker, poorer populations resided in Chile's northern nitrate cities and ports (particularly Arica, Antofagasta, Iquique, and Tocopilla). By the end of the century, nitrate labor mobilization started to agitate against nitrate producers and the Chilean state, who on several occasions unleashed a violent police resistance to extinguish protests. Thus, by the time that Japanese individuals trickled into Chilean ports as the crews for Japanese nitrate-carrying vessels in the early 1900s, they stepped into an already racialized and fragile social environment.<sup>384</sup>

The Japanese individuals arriving in Chile included ship crews and maritime workers authorized to enter Chile temporarily, merchants or businessmen permitted to reside in Chile, permanent immigrants who entered through either licit or clandestine means, and other travelers or aspiring migrants passing through towards final destinations elsewhere in South America. On frequent occasions, Chilean port officials tasked with guarding Chile's increasingly narrow paths to entry for Asians (as discussed in the previous chapter) deliberately or accidentally tweaked

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<sup>384</sup> For background on nitrate labor organization and conflict see Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

migration policy and wrongly apprehended Chinese or Japanese crewmen, misplaced their passports, and improperly conducted searches and hygienic exams.

As unwarranted and discriminatory scrutiny proliferated in Chilean nitrate ports, Japanese demanded responses and retribution from Santiago through Japanese diplomats deeply committed to protecting their nationals abroad. In August of 1916, for example, officials in the Arica port's Sanitary Station confiscated and subsequently misplaced the passports of six Japanese recently arrived onboard a Toyo Kisen Kaisha vessel (the Japanese shipper that conducted the majority of Chilean-Japanese commerce) named the *Seiyo Maru*. Evidently, the port authorities confiscated the passports for submission to the higher authorities of the province, from where they would be sent for final inspection and authorization for entry by the Ministry of the Interior in Santiago. Somewhere in this highly unwarranted and inefficient bureaucratic sequence, however, the passports had gone missing and the six Japanese—stripped of their travel documents and thus immobile—solicited the assistance the Japanese Legation in Santiago for assistance. K. Jijima, Japanese Minister to Chile, subsequently contacted the Chilean foreign minister to protest this offense as well as many similar cases of confiscated and missing passports of Japanese landing in Arica, Valparaíso, and other ports. He reminded the minister that the Chilean-Japanese treaty of 1897 entitled Japanese citizens to the right of free travel and treatment on par with Chilean citizens. Jijima thus requested the return of these passports and implied that higher officials in Tokyo would intervene shortly should Santiago fail to rein in the unpredictable and unjustified behavior of their port authorities.<sup>385</sup>

Chileans in Santiago, regarding this and other similar cases, reacted with a mix of confusion and apathy as they exchanged flurries of internal paperwork with regional officials full of confused and hazy details. When occasionally earnestly hoping to resolve an issue, officials in Santiago seemed to struggle significantly to figure out exactly what happened in many claims against port authorities or to control local Chilean authorities who enforced policy at their own discretion. Santiago diplomats often subsequently mustered mealy-mouthed apologies and commitments to correct their missteps. Regardless of the sincerity with which actors at each level of Chile's immigration bureaucracy responded towards the concerns of Japanese migrants and travelers, these conflicts in Chile's distant north percolated up to the desks of the most elite advocates of the Pacific vision in Tokyo and Santiago.<sup>386</sup>

### **The Case of Yoichi Nakajima**

In August of 1916, a Japanese barber named Yoichi Nakajima employed by the Santa Isabel nitrate plant in Tocopilla contacted the Japanese Minister in Santiago, K. Jijima, to report extensive injustices committed against him by Chilean police. One of Chile's largest nitrate production sites, the Santa Isabel *oficina* operated under the British-owned Anglo-Chilean nitrate consortium. Nakajima evidently traveled from Tocopilla to Santiago to recount his story to the Japanese minister who then summarized and translated the testimony into Spanish and forwarded it to the Chilean foreign ministry.<sup>387</sup>

According to his testimony, Nakajima's experience unfolded like this. On the evening of June 20, 1916, while attending the Tocopilla circus, Nakajima briefly exited the premises during

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<sup>385</sup> K. Jijima to Juan Enrique Tocornal, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 14, August 24, 1916, Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, ARNAD.

<sup>386</sup> Letter to K. Jijima, Encargo de Negocios de Japón en Chile, Oficio No. 3086, November 23, 1916, Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, ARNAD.

<sup>387</sup> K. Jijima to Juan Enrique Tocornal, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 16, August 11, 1916, Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, ARNAD.

an intermission to smoke a cigarette. While attempting to return to the performance and when required to produce his admission ticket, Nakajima accidentally presented a little flag that had been in his pocket and had mixed in with his ticket and tobacco rolling papers. Offering Nakajima no opportunity to retrieve the document, the doorkeeper beckoned two nearby police officers who arrested Nakajima and transported him directly to the police station. When Nakajima attempted to explain the situation, one of the officers struck Nakajima in the face, snarling “shut up, *chino*,” among other offensive curses. The officers then carelessly attended to the blood “streaming” down Nakajima’s face before tying up his legs and arms. The officers ultimately detained Nakajima in a cell overnight while they awaited orders from their lieutenant.<sup>388</sup>

The following morning, a judge arrived to resolve the situation but because Nakajima spoke little Spanish, only recorded the officers’ narrative before departing. Nakajima subsequently overheard the police determine that because they had still not yet made contact with their commanding officer, they would demand that Nakajima either pay a fine of 12 pesos for immediate release, or pay ten pesos and serve a five day jail sentence. The soldiers also failed to provide Nakajima with any food until 3:00pm on the day following his arrest. Word of his detainment evidently got out as a Chilean friend of Nakajima’s delivered the bail money. But, renegeing on their offer, the police refused to release Nakajima because, they claimed, they continued to await orders from their commanding officers. Nakajima remained in detention for another night. The next morning, the lieutenant finally arrived to interrogate Nakajima whose friend then retrieved the original payment from one of the officers and delivered it to a judge who then released Nakajima despite an additional sentence of a half day of forced labor.<sup>389</sup>

After Japanese diplomats presented this story to their Chilean counterparts, the Chileans outlined a differing interpretation of events. Officials in Chile’s foreign ministry claimed that police encountered Nakajima in a drunken stupor at the circus on the night of his arrest and inflicted on him only a “minor wound” out of self-defense. Moreover, Chilean officials claimed that Nakajima had earned a reputation among Tocopilla’s police as “a habitual drunk” and his record possessed two previous arrests for similarly inebriated engagements with authorities.<sup>390</sup>

After exhausting the search catalogues, many collections, and the brains of archivists in Santiago and northern Chile, I continue to search for indications of how this event concluded.

### **The Case of “Eduardo” Makiti Yano**

A similar, though more involved, case occurred three years later in April of 1919 involving a single, non-married 35 year-old Japanese resident of Tocopilla named Eduardo Makiti Yano (presumably he adopted the Hispanic first name upon moving to Chile in 1914).<sup>391</sup> The record remains unclear as to Yano’s profession; one document identifies him as a merchant and another as a barber on a nitrate plant, but none provide much detail regarding his socioeconomic background or status. As I recount below, Yano traveled from the remote nitrate port city of Tocopilla to the Japanese Legation in Santiago to report on and demand legal retribution for violent abuses committed by both local bandits and Tocopilla police. The

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<sup>388</sup> K. Jijima to to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 16, August 11, 1916. “Memorándum del Denuncio Traducido en Tenor de Yoichi Nakajima Contra la Inicua Detención Por La Autoridad de Tocopilla En El Dia 20 a 22 de Junio de 1916,” Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, ARNAD.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Letter to K. Jijima, Encargo de Negocios de Japón en Chile, Oficio No. unclear, November 22, 1916, Fondo RREE, Volume 2012, ARNAD.

<sup>391</sup> Yano’s story is briefly recounted in: Mauricio Jara Fernández, “Chile y Japón En La Decada de Los ’10: Un Homenaje, Un Negocio y Una Discriminación,” *Notas Históricas y Geográficas* 7 no.8 (1996): 89–99.

Japanese Legation translated and forwarded Yano's testimony to the Chilean Minister of Foreign affairs himself, whom Japanese diplomats requested would "take the necessary measures to deliver justice."<sup>392</sup>

According to the translation of Yano's oral testimony provided to the Japanese Legation on July 10, 1919, his experience unfolded as follows. At 1:00am on Monday April 21, Yano departed a gathering at the home of an Italian baker when six strangers descended from the shadows, violently assaulted him, and robbed him of 200 pesos before running off. Wounded and rattled, Yano walked to the Tocopilla police station to report the mugging. The officer on duty, Sub-Inspector of Police Lorenzo Lastra Sepúlveda, looked Yano over before striking him in the face, questioning "what does this *chino* want?" (Yano later described the likening of him to Chinese as "especially offensive for us Japanese.") Yano replied: "I am Japanese not Chinese. I do not understand why I am being treated this way. It cannot be like this, and I will take the measures to settle this." This response evidently enraged Lastra who barked, "The Japanese and Chinese are all the same because they are equally Asian. What can Asians do anyways? If you wish, I will give you some more." Lastra then began to beat Yano, counting the blows out loud up to thirty. Yano collapsed as blood "bathed" his face and several of his teeth dangled loose. Lastra then lifted Yano by his scalp and confiscated his documents on which Lastra reportedly spat. Lastra then ordered another officer to accompany Yano to a hospital but, unable to locate the hospital staff due to the late hour, the officer and Yano returned to the police station and Lastra instructed Yano to go home, by which time it was nearly 2:30am. Just after dawn, Yano recounted, "all the Japanese of Tocopilla came to see me" to commiserate and help treat his wounds. After discussion, the group resolved for Yano to request justice for police brutality from the Japanese Legation in Santiago.<sup>393</sup>

As Yano plotted his travel to Santiago, word had spread out about his mugging and subsequent beatings at the hands of Tocopilla authorities. Indeed, three days later, Yano's landlord and another evidently sympathetic Chilean raised the issue with Police Prefect Aníbal Larenas who visited Yano at home and recorded his testimony of events. Larenas assured Yano that he would punish offending officers internally and thus instructed Yano to "not yet take any action with the [Japanese] Legation. I expect that within two or three days all of this will be settled." Yet, nearly a week later, Yano reported noticing no changes or internal action among the Tocopilla police. Lorenzo Lastra—the officer who assaulted Yano—remained on duty and only escalated his verbal abuse, shouting at Yano on the street one day that "Japanese are the same race as Chinese and they can't do anything—especially to the police." According to Yano, Lastra flaunted the event and crowned himself the "Kaiser of Tocopilla." Yano even attempted to raise his complaints to the Governor of Tocopilla, Arturo Merino, who evidently was later dismissed from his position for having sent a report of Yano's testimony and petition for justice up the chain of command.<sup>394</sup>

Two weeks later, Yano gathered for dinner with several Japanese friends at a local eatery. Left alone after the meal and while sipping tea, Officer Lastra and a lawyer named Castilla came upon Yano, sat down on either side of him, and invited Yano to libations. When Yano refused the offer, Lastra began to joke and humorously questioned why Yano remained upset about the

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<sup>392</sup> Letter to Luis Barros Borgoño, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. unclear, July 21, 1919. Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

<sup>393</sup> "Memoria presentada por el súbdito japonés Sr. Makiti Yano (Tocopilla)," 1-2. Included in anexos to Letter to Luis Barros Borgoño, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. unclear, July 21, 1919, Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

<sup>394</sup> "Memoria presentada por el súbdito japonés Sr. Makiti Yano (Tocopilla)," 2.

beating he endured two weeks earlier. Castillo then spoke up and asserted that Asians simply were incapable of grasping the power of the police and that it therefore was not worth wasting time trying to convey to them the state of things. The pair then departed.

When Yano attempted to leave the restaurant fifteen minutes later, two awaiting officers seized Yano and diverted him back to the police station under the guard of several more police. While enroute, the police confiscated his wallet and belongings. Yano made special reference to this theft of his belongings because evidently one of the papers snatched by the officers contained the names of three Tocopilla officers present at the station during the initial night that Lastra inflicted on Yano an “inhumane beating” and who had offered Yano to serve as supporting witnesses in any potential investigation. These officers also confiscated a draft of a telegram Yano had composed, presumably to the Japanese Legation in Santiago. Once at the police station as the guards deliberated, Officer Lastra came upon the scene and cackled deridingly: “What do we have here? So many people to guard a *chino* and you have not yet even fully controlled him yet.” The six officers then grabbed Yano by his arms, legs, and torso and detained him in a pitch-black cell until morning. By 9:00am, two guards escorted Yano to the offices of a judge named Francisco Santarita who ordered Yano to pay a fine of 18 pesos for damage to one of the officer’s uniforms and another 20 pesos for public drunkenness. (Mutual accusations of intoxication and claims to sobriety form a tense core of the contradicting accounts by the parties throughout these events.) A friend of Yano’s paid these 38 pesos as well as an arbitrary additional 5.70 peso fine which the police levied seemingly without cause.<sup>395</sup> Tocopilla authorities later narrated this sequence of events as the justifiable detention for public intoxication of a belligerent Yano (along with an equally intoxicated Chilean friend) who abrasively resisted officers’ repeated requests to restrain themselves.<sup>396</sup>

Yano saw this experience as the final straw and determined once and for all to travel to Santiago to solicit intervention from the Japanese state. Yano intended to sail down the coast to Valparaíso on the ship *Mapocho*, set to depart on May 15 (several weeks after the initial events of April 21). Over the preceding days, however, Yano received several court summonses, presumably designed to impede his departure. Nonetheless, Yano eventually boarded a ship but whose bookkeeper refused to sell him a ticket to Valparaíso, replying that he knew who Yano was and that he was “trying to escape from Tocopilla.” The bookkeeper elaborated that (likely the Tocopilla police) “have informed me of all of this” and mandated that Yano disembark at the next possible port in the small town of Gatico; the ticket for which cost 3.70 pesos but, for Yano, the bookkeeper demanded a price of 7 pesos. When the ship landed in Gatico by 6:00pm, the awaiting Prefect of Gatico, Carlos Honorato, escorted him under guard to the local police station. There, the authorities incarcerated Yano in an outdoor corral without any food. Two guards came to inform Yano that prisoners could only consume food brought by visitors and proposed that two of Yano’s “countrymen” who lived in Gatico could deliver Yano a meal. As it turned out, the individuals the police assumed were Japanese were actually Chinese and either unable or uninterested in assisting Yano. Yano eventually bribed the guards to inform one of his Chilean associates in Gatico of his detention there and the police released Yano under a friend’s supervision and bail of 100 pesos. (Though we can assume Yano was not at all wealthy, he never qualified any of the many fines and bail payments he incurred throughout this process.)<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>396</sup> “Sumario instruido por la gobernación de Tocopilla con motivo del denuncia hecho por Eduardo Makiti Yano,” Interviews conducted between May 12-May 14, 1919, Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

<sup>397</sup> “Memoria presentada por el súbdito japonés Sr. Makiti Yano (Tocopilla),” 5.

Yano spent ten days in Gatico until May 25 when the court ordered Yano to return to Tocopilla under police escort on board the ship *Maipo*. Once more in Tocopilla, several of Yano's Japanese friends arrived to the police station to support him and took great offense when the officers ordered the group to speak only in Spanish (which they could not really do). Yano remained in custody until officers released him by evening. On his way out of the station, Yano greeted a few of the officers who had been on duty the night of his initial assault on April 21 and offered to serve as his witnesses. They informed Yano, however, that their superiors severely threatened any officers who offered to support Yano. Indeed, an officer named Marcelino Iribarren, who provided an earlier testimony that corroborated Yano's account, suffered punishment of a brutal month in prison during which he spent a week in handcuffs and was given only a shirt and underwear in a cell with cement flooring.<sup>398</sup>

As Yano battled various layers of local Chilean law enforcement that violently and seemingly conspiratorially collaborated to block his passage to the Japanese Legation, Tocopilla's government (the *Gobernación*) conducted their own investigation into Yano's allegations. From May 12-14, Tocopilla authorities interrogated twenty-one individuals involved with Yano's initial detention and assault on April 21. The testimonies almost unanimously absolved every Chilean and affirmed the image of Yano as a habitual drunk and an untrustworthy narrator.

Tocopilla's investigation began with an interrogation of Yano himself. Yano's account here is much shorter than the many pages he submitted to the Japanese Legation. Yano's two testimonies mostly align except that when speaking before the Japanese Legation, Yano identified the establishment from which he departed at 1:00am on April 21 as the home of an Italian baker, yet before the *Gobernación* he described it as a saloon, as "a party house." He further mentions that it was Officer Lastra who was drunk while on duty when Yano first arrived in the police station on April 21, rather than Yano himself. Yano also claimed that Prefect of Police, Aníbal Larenas, was also present, likewise inebriated, and had ordered Lastra to attack Yano. Yano also asserted here that he had never once been arrested, thus contradicting the claims of several officers that Yano owned a long record of drunken entanglements with law enforcement. It is impossible to know if the police officers were under the influence, but considering that Yano had departed from a bar at 1:00am, it is not a stretch to assume that he had consumed at least some amount of alcohol.<sup>399</sup>

The investigation's subsequent interviews include police authorities such as Prefect Larenas, Officer Lastra, and other officers that both Yano and authorities under accusation called as witnesses. Larenas claimed that he was not present at the police station the night of Yano's assault and that the unknown assailants had inflicted all of Yano's wounds, rather than the Tocopilla police. Furthermore, Larenas argued that because they did not previously know each other, Yano would have no way of identifying him at the station and, indeed, Yano was "a person with a bad background" with many citations for public drunkenness. Officer Lastra's subsequent testimony likewise claimed that police merely interrogated Yano without laying a finger on him and that Yano arrived at the police with "light wounds" already inflicted from his mugging.<sup>400</sup>

The interrogations of over a dozen different officers on duty that evening further contradicted Yano's testimony. One officer named Raúl Negrete asserted that he, rather than

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<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>399</sup> "Sumario instruido por la gobernación de Tocopilla con motivo del denuncia hecho por Eduardo Makiti Yano."

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

Lastra, first received Yano at the police station and then, appreciating the extent of Yano's wounds, accompanied him to the hospital. However, the hospital refused to treat Yano due to the late hour and because Yano's wounds evidently were insufficiently dire. Negrete further claimed that Prefect Larenas was not present that evening and that Officer Lastra did not harm Yano. Rather, he detailed how an intoxicated Yano abrasively resisted assistance from the police and threatened to report them to the Japanese Legation. Officer Miguel Rojas Vergara testified that he was not present the night of April 21, but that on May 1 (the evening of Yano's second arrest), an intoxicated Yano attacked and injured him while he attempted to escort Yano to the police station. Other testifying officers reportedly on scene claimed deniability either by virtue of being asleep at the station or being elsewhere in the station when Yano arrived and thus unable to comment on accusation of police harassment. Nearly all, however, affirmed police sobriety, Yano's intoxication, and that higher police authorities were not present at the scene.<sup>401</sup>

Interviews of various Tocopilla community members only further reinforced the authorities' narrative of events. For example, Doña Rosa Riqueña owned an eatery where Yano frequented but where he was no longer welcome because he always inebriated himself and constantly provoked trouble. She also reported that she had witnessed him drunkenly quarreling with police on numerous occasions. Three other community members testified that they attended the theater with Prefect Larenas—and confirmed that he was fully sober—the night of April 21, thus corroborating Larenas' claim that he was not at the police station the night of Yano's assault. (Larenas only mentioned attending the theater in a later interrogation).<sup>402</sup>

Following a two-day investigation, the Gobernación de Tocopilla absolved each officer of any allegations and permitted all involved to return to their posts. This full acquittal seemingly emboldened Tocopilla officials (if we believe Yano's testimony) to continue tormenting Yano with impunity and blocking his departure from the Tocopilla region. It is hard to verify the truth of any of these testimonies. While these records seemingly cast Yano as a habitual drunk who sincerely earned his poor reputation in the community, the fact that each testimony regurgitates precisely the same information raises suspicions that everyone on record had either previously agreed, or were ordered, to vilify Yano and exonerate Tocopilla authorities.<sup>403</sup>

By June 14, nearly two months after his initial assault, Yano finally departed Tocopilla and arrived in Valparaíso onboard the *Maipo* by the evening of June 19. Yano's testimony abruptly ends here and provides no details of his arrival to Santiago, the intervening days, or his interactions with Japanese diplomatic authorities. This gap in the timeline is surprising because, to this point, Yano outlined his experiences in extensive detail and also because his testimony at the Japanese Legation is dated to July 10, nearly a month after his final departure from Tocopilla.<sup>404</sup> I have exhausted the files, search engines, and the brains of the archivists at every major archive in Santiago and have not found a single further mention of Eduardo Makiti Yano. So, while Tocopilla authorities' sham investigation absolved all Chileans accused of wrongdoing, the record offers no indication as to whether Chileans in Santiago attempted or refused to render justice, or how far Japanese diplomats in Chile pushed for retribution.

Yet, that these documents exist in the correspondence between the Chilean foreign ministry and the Japanese Legation illustrates that Japanese diplomats must have intervened to

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Gobernación de Tocopilla, "Transcribe decreto gubernativo que ordena reponer a su puesto al Prefecto de Policía," Oficio No. 321, May 14, 1919, Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

<sup>404</sup> Memoria presentada por el súbdito japonés Sr. Makiti Yano (Tocopilla)," 6.

some degree. And despite the efforts of local Chilean courts and officers to prevent Yano from telling his story, the Japanese Legation translated into Spanish and forwarded Yano's testimony to Chile's Foreign Ministry. Nine Japanese residents of Tocopilla (presumably Yano's friends and acquaintances) also authored a letter dated to April 30, 1919, on Japanese Legation letterhead and which was forwarded to the Chilean subsecretary of foreign affairs by the Japanese minister to Chile. The letter requested the minister's "intervention" in this matter which impacted "not only our everyday life, but also our right to life and well-being." The Japanese thus demanded "impartial justice and protection."<sup>405</sup> Japanese diplomats further asserted that Yano's many "witnesses to justify his cause" obligated Santiago to provide him with justice and retribution.<sup>406</sup> Transcripts of the Tocopilla Gobernación's investigation are also typed on Chilean Foreign Ministry letterhead, further proving that high authorities in Santiago would have been made aware of Yano's case.

Ultimately, the case of Eduardo Makiti Yano furiously charged into the diplomatic record of Chilean-Japanese relations and, just as mysteriously and promptly, retreated from it. Despite the fleeting and incomplete timeline, however, Yano's case illustrates how the Pacific visions of actors in the diplomatic sphere clashed on the ground with conflicting ideas about race and nation. Centrally, the record indicates that Japanese actors—such as Yano, other residents in Tocopilla, and the Japanese diplomats—firmly believed that being Japanese entitled one to respect and protections. For example, Yano confidently argued that his Japanese (which he also made a point to distinguish from Chinese) nationality demanded respect. And that it occurred to the group to solicit intervention from Japanese *and* Chilean officials in Santiago illustrates that they must have understood themselves to occupy a position that deserved attention from state officials. In 1919, as Japan fast approached the peak of its imperial power, its nationals abroad seemingly understood that that geopolitical might lent them a protected legal and racial status while abroad.

These Japanese ideas collided with contradictory Chilean understandings of racial and geopolitical hierarchies. Chileans consistently derided Yano as "*chino*" and believed that universally less-civilized Asian immigrants were entitled to no special privileges under Chilean law. Yet, Tocopilla authorities seemed particularly anxious over Yano's threats to report these Chileans to Japanese diplomats in Santiago. If Tocopilla authorities colluded in their testimonies (which seems possible considering how uniformly almost each interrogation reiterates the same information), the frequent mention of Yano's threats to involve the Japanese state reveal that actors took this notion very seriously. And moreover, police, courts, and transportation officials in Tocopilla *did* collude to prevent Yano from departing the region, perhaps because they worried that they would be held to account either by Japanese diplomats or Chileans in Santiago. So, despite sharing little enthusiasm for the Pacific vision of diplomats and businessmen in Santiago, local Chileans seemingly grasped that they were also operating within broader national, and geopolitical contexts, but harbored notions of Chilean racial and national superiority.

Yano's case illustrates how the highest sphere of Chilean-Japanese relations had to contend with the conflict-ridden social relations of Chilean nitrate port cities such as Tocopilla.

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<sup>405</sup> K. Fushimi, K. Masuda, K. Fukushima, S. Utagawa, M. Asada, Y. Nishihara, Y. Sato, K. Suzuki, H. Shimizu, Letter to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. unclear, April 30, 1919, Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

<sup>406</sup> Letter to Luis Barros Borgoño, Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. unclear, July 21, 1919, Fondo RREE, Volume 2192, ARNAD.

Local disputes rapidly ascended the diplomatic chain of command and could directly impact, and potentially imperial, the Pacific vision. Yano's case is certainly exceptional in the volume of documentation it produced, but we can assume that many similar and undocumented examples erupted throughout the nitrate region as the strengthening of the infrastructure for the Chilean-Japanese nitrate chain created many opportunities for Japanese and Chilean actors to brush shoulders. The case also illustrates the sensitive battle over regional and central authorities in Chile.

### **The Case of Goro Miyazaki**

In 1942, Chilean and Japanese diplomats clashed anew over a deportation order and suspicions of espionage against a 40-year-old Japanese resident in Chile named Goro Miyazaki.<sup>407</sup> Born in the city of Shizuoka, Miyazaki studied Law at the University of Tokyo and worked for the Mitsui Bussan Kaisha (the international trading branch of the powerful Mitsui *zaibatsu*) until 1936 when he moved to Buenos Aires to help direct Mitsui's business there. After residing in Argentina for four years, Miyazaki moved to Santiago in February of 1941 and founded (and served as president of) the Chilean Oriental Commercial Society Ltd.. Miyazaki's firm acted as a commission agent for Mitsui Bussan's and (and other firms') investments in and exports of Chilean minerals (especially manganese, cobalt, and copper). From 1941 to 1942 the firm conducted nearly 102 million pesos of commerce, exporting primarily minerals and wool to Japan and importing into Chile machinery, various manufactured metallic products, chemicals, rubber, crystals, and porcelain, among others.<sup>408</sup>

In August of 1942, Chilean authorities in the northern port city of Arica arrested Miyazaki for possessing aerial film footage and extensive documentation on Chilean manganese and other mineral deposits. Miyazaki evidently filmed Chilean mineral deposits over several flights, and his material aroused suspicion among Chilean authorities of Japanese military reconnaissance. The Commander in Chief of Chile's air force determined the aerial footage to be "of sufficient aerial military importance that it could be used by any other nation." What was more, Miyazaki had entered Chile in 1940 under a six-month visa and, according to the Chilean foreign ministry, neglected to apply for a renewal or extension and thus remained in Chile illegally ever since. Chilean authorities subsequently confiscated the material and ordered Miyazaki immediately to depart the country.<sup>409</sup>

Japanese diplomats quickly rallied to Miyazaki's defense to ease Chilean suspicions of criminal activity or espionage. Kiyoshi Yamagata, Japanese Minister to Chile, reassured Chilean authorities that Miyazaki's conduct was purely commercial and that, as an emerging exporter of minerals to Japan, it was unsurprising that Miyazaki conducted research on Chile's raw materials. Yamagata elaborated that Miyazaki's firm—the Chilean Oriental Commercial Society—enjoyed friendly relations with many of Chile's most powerful banks as well as the Corporación de Fomento de la Producción and the Caja de Crédito Minero, whose officials

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<sup>407</sup> Goro Miyazaki's story also appears in the following two articles concerning Japanese intelligence networks in Chile and Latin America in the 1940s: Ulises Parraguez and Pedro Iacobelli, "Goro Miyazaki: Intriga y sospecha sobre el espionaje japonés en Chile durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial," *Revista de historia (Concepción)* 27 no. 2 (diciembre 2020): 303-319. Pedro Iacobelli, "Japan's Intelligence Networks in Chile During the Second World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 56 no. 1 (2020): 77-95.

<sup>408</sup> In 1941, the Chilean Oriental Commercial Society exported to Japan nearly \$50 million pesos worth of goods and imported to Chile over \$36 and a half million pesos.

<sup>409</sup> Unclear author to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 3136, September 8, 1942, Fondo RREE, Volume 4635, ARNAD. And Letter to Ministro del Interior de Chile, Oficio No. 3136, September 2, 1942, Fondo RREE, Volume 4635, ARNAD.

would surely vouch for Miyazaki's integrity and character as a businessman. Moreover, Yamagata described that Miyazaki's firm worked under the Mitsui conglomerate, and thus an expulsion order would offend the powerful firm which conducted other important commerce with Chile. Yamagata clarified that Miyazaki's activities greatly served "the international commerce of Chile." And finally, Japanese officials explained that current war conditions greatly imperiled Japanese transit across the Pacific and thus requested that Chile stay the deportation order.<sup>410</sup>

Goyo Miyazaki himself appealed to Chile's Minister of the Interior in his request to remain in Chile. From the outset, Miyazaki declared that "I am not a person that constitutes any danger to the state," and his purely commercial activities only served "the economic interests of Chile and...Japan." Furthermore, he took great care to clarify that though he partook in Japan's compulsory military service training as a young man, he retained absolutely no other connection to the Japanese military. Miyazaki also reported that he had previously been detained and accused of espionage on several occasions in Chile but that his proven relations with Chilean businessmen had absolved him each time. For instance, during a previous business trip in Valparaíso a Chilean reporter accused him of photographing sites of military interest and infiltrating the social worlds of Chilean naval commanders in order to extract secrets pertinent to national defense. Miyazaki cited numerous Chilean firms and individuals who he assured would exonerate him.<sup>411</sup>

Miyazaki additionally argued that his firm offered a unique opportunity for Chilean commerce at a moment when current Japanese law prohibited capital from leaving the country. Miyazaki had won a concession from the Japanese state for Mitsui to invest three million pesos for cobalt mining in Chile. Miyazaki explained how he brokered the proper introductions between the Chilean Cobalt Company and Mitsui and had acquired a mineral engineer to investigate the state of the deposits. Miyazaki even forwarded to officials in Santiago his contract with Mitsui as further evidence of his legitimate commercial interests in cobalt. Miyazaki also described his efforts to investigate manganese exports to Japan to make up for the loss of Japan's manganese supply from Germany. Miyazaki thus implied that his expulsion from Chile would harm Chilean commerce.<sup>412</sup>

Despite their suspicions of Miyazaki's potential "anti-Chilean activities" and espionage, the Chileans walked a careful line to preserve good favor with Japanese officials. One official in Santiago made clear that the foreign ministry was giving the issue its "maximum possible attention specifically because of the cordial relations that have always existed between Japan and Chile." The same official elaborated that "the isolated actions of one individual [should not] damage relations between two countries that have always held each other in special deference." Chileans also hoped to ensure the optics of acting transparently within the law. Though they refused to rescind the deportation order, the Chileans acquiesced to Japanese demands of halting their investigation into Miyazaki's activities and extended to him a period of seventy days to leave the country.<sup>413</sup> In the end, Miyazaki evidently was pressured to voluntarily depart from

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<sup>410</sup> Letter to Ministro del Interior de Chile, Oficio No. 3136, September 2, 1942, Fondo RREE, Volume 4635, ARNAD.

<sup>411</sup> "Copia de la Solicitud que el Señor Goro Miyazaki Presentó, Con Fecha de 28 de Agosto, al Señor Ministro del Interior," Fondo RREE, Volume 4635, ARNAD, 1-6.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Unclear author to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 3136, September 8, 1942, Fondo RREE, Volume 4635, ARNAD. And Letter to Ministro del Interior de Chile, Oficio No. 3136, September 2, 1942, Fondo RREE, Volume 4635, ARNAD.

Chile by late September 1942 and was denied his petition to remain in Chile evidently not for any crime of espionage but for having violated Chilean migration law.<sup>414</sup>

Like many of the other fragmentary case studies that offer a glimpse into the interactions between Japanese and Chileans in Chile, Goro Miyazaki subsequently disappears from the archival record. While we do not know the end of his story, his case illustrates once more how local altercations between Japanese actors and Chilean authorities played out within the higher elements of the Pacific vision: commerce, migration, diplomacy. And by the 1940s, despite the withering geopolitical peace in the Pacific and even after Japan and the US were fully at war, Chileans attempted to walk a delicate line and remain in business with Japan. Both Chilean and Japanese officials clearly hoped to continue commerce even into 1942. And even in a suspected case of Japanese military surveillance against Chile, officials believed that they could resolve the issue in order to preserve the avenues for Chilean-Japanese commerce.

Goro Miyazaki's case proves a fitting ending for this chapter as my next chapter transitions back to the orbit of commerce and diplomacy to examine how the generations of Chilean diplomat-businessmen entrusted with opening Japan's nitrate markets in the 1930s navigated the arrival of war to the Pacific.

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<sup>414</sup> Legacion de Chile en el Japón to Subsecretario de Relaciones Exteriores del Japón, Oficio No. 36, September 22, 1942, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2049, Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile.

## Chapter 5: The Pacific Vision in a World at War, 1930s-1943

Between the mid-1930s and early 1940s, decades of efforts to solidify Japan as durable market for Chilean nitrate seemingly materialized into quantitative results. Contracts for increasing volumes of nitrate sales, reliable shipping networks, and the ambition to leverage the nitrate infrastructure to initiate commerce in other Chilean commodities (such as iodine, copper, and wool) all contributed to the most thickly institutionalized iteration that the Chilean-Japanese relationship had reached. Simultaneously, however, deteriorating US-Japanese relations culminated in the outbreak of total war in late 1941. Chile and the Pacific vision were thus inadvertently thrust into the center of the Pacific's deteriorating inter-imperial conflict.

Chilean Minister to Japan, Armando Labra Carvajal, summarized the situation in October of 1940: "the Pacific has become the arena where the two ideologies that divide the world—totalitarianism [represented by Japan] and democracy [represented by the US]—will decide the destinies of humanity. The Pacific is now not only the 'economic bridge' between the occident and the Asian orient, but will be as the Mediterranean used to be but in a much larger scale: the center of occidental civilization and of the new order of things in the world."<sup>415</sup> A formidable adversary for a US empire, Japan, according to these Chileans, hoped to replace its former commerce with Europe and the US that were now lost to war "with new markets...in Latin America and the Dutch East Indies. This is to say, Japanese commerce is shifting from the Mediterranean to the Pacific."<sup>416</sup> Though Chile clung to neutrality in the Japanese-US conflict until January of 1943, Labra echoed many of his counterparts in grasping that this imminent imperial collision would "undoubtedly impact our Latin American interest."<sup>417</sup>

Many others likewise characterized Latin American-Japanese commerce as a critical battlefield for US-Japanese imperial competition in the Pacific. In May 1934, Sergio Montt, Chilean Charge d'Affaires in Japan, commented that "Nipponese commercial penetration in our continent has developed with the greatest intensity, to the detriment of the European countries and the United States which had those markets for many years."<sup>418</sup> On April 20, 1935 the *Japan Advertiser* (the British owned, most-influential English-language daily published in Asia) outlined how Japanese manufactures were replacing US suppliers of Latin America's cotton, radios, automobiles, and how Japan's well-oiled domestic manufacturing machine was quickly adapting to put South American raw materials (such as Chilean nitrate and copper) to work.<sup>419</sup> The article's US author warned: "In Western South American markets, Japan has become the most formidable of all our competitors...in the matter of prices no important nation, least of all the United States, can compete with Japan. Cheap labor, government-subsidized industry and shipping, a highly-organized system of distribution, and on top of all this a very depreciated

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<sup>415</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 416/209, October 15, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 4422, Archivo Nacional de la Administración (hereafter ARNAD).

<sup>416</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 202/111, May 23, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>417</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 416/209, October 15, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4422, ARNAD.

<sup>418</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 50, May 29, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD, 9.

<sup>419</sup> By 1935, Chile's two biggest export commodities continued to be nitrate (approximately 42% of all exports) and copper (approximately 40% of all exports.) Carlos de la Barra to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Oficio No. 256/70, November 23, 1935. Anexo includes the article: "Chile's Economic Rehabilitation and Readjustment of its Foreign Debt," *The Oriental Economist*, December 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3762, ARNAD.

currency—these things give Japan the upper hand.”<sup>420</sup> Though also pointing to the rise of English and French commerce in the region, it was Japan’s conquest of Latin American markets that most struck observers throughout the Pacific in the 1930s. US journalist Carleton Beals similarly concluded in 1938: “Don’t look now, Akron, Ohio, but Ecuador and Colombia are buying Tokio auto tires.”<sup>421</sup>

This chapter examines when and how the project to solidify Japan as a vast market for nitrate reached its infrastructural peak in the late 1930s before the Second World War ripped it apart by the early 1940s. I make two arguments. First, I argue that Chile—unlike the rest of Latin America, which much earlier disaffiliated from Japan and reassured the US of its geopolitical allegiances—retained commercial and diplomatic ties with Japan until 1943 specifically because of Chileans’ visions for economic and diplomatic gains through a partnership with Japan. Chilean diplomats and nitrate representatives pursued a return on their investment in Japanese nitrate markets even while fully informed of the ambition, violence, and scope of Japanese empire. Indeed, Chileans enthusiastically targeted the Japanese military and imperial possessions (such as Manchukuo) for consumption of nitrate as an agricultural fertilizer and an ingredient in the production of war materiel for use in combat against Allied forces. The Pacific vision thus seemingly outweighed any moral anxieties of being complicit in Japan’s imperial or military campaigns.

Second, I argue that Chilean commerce with Japan was inextricably tied to the international history unfolding in the Pacific in the 1930s and 1940s. It was not obvious to Chileans or Japanese throughout the 1930s that the US would emerge from any eventual war against Japan both victorious and in possession of undisputed Pacific hegemony. Rather, Chilean-Japanese mutual interest in commerce nourished visions of an alternative future in which they were Pacific protagonists and could conduct commerce autonomous from US interests. It was only by January of 1943, as it became increasingly evident that the US would triumph in the war and the fact that the US remained quantitatively a larger trading partner for Chile than was Japan, that Chile terminated relations with Japan and the Axis powers. Up until then, however, many Chilean Pacific visionaries articulated scant objections to their complicity in Japan’s imperial project. When one Chilean policy report from 1938 urged an understanding of “the orientations of Japanese foreign policy which, in the future, can affect Chilean interests in the Pacific,” its author explicitly positioned Chile as an invested contestant in the competition over the Pacific’s economic future.<sup>422</sup>

This chapter hinges on the year 1937. The first sections of the chapter narrate how Chilean-Japanese nitrate commerce, which imploded after the global economic collapse of 1929, gradually recovered across the early 1930s and soared to new heights of quantity, institutionalization, and enthusiasm by the end of the decade. Nitrate commerce increased in tandem with Japan’s exploding commerce throughout Latin America. The enthusiasm of these advances culminated in 1937 with a Japanese-funded commercial mission of Chileans to Japan, China, and Manchukuo and with the Nagoya Pan-Pacific Peace Exposition in which Japanese officials hoped to flex their international leadership through celebrations of their achievements in commerce and industry.

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<sup>420</sup> Edward Tomlinson, “America Losing South American Commerce to Japan and England,” *The Japan Times*, April 20, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD.

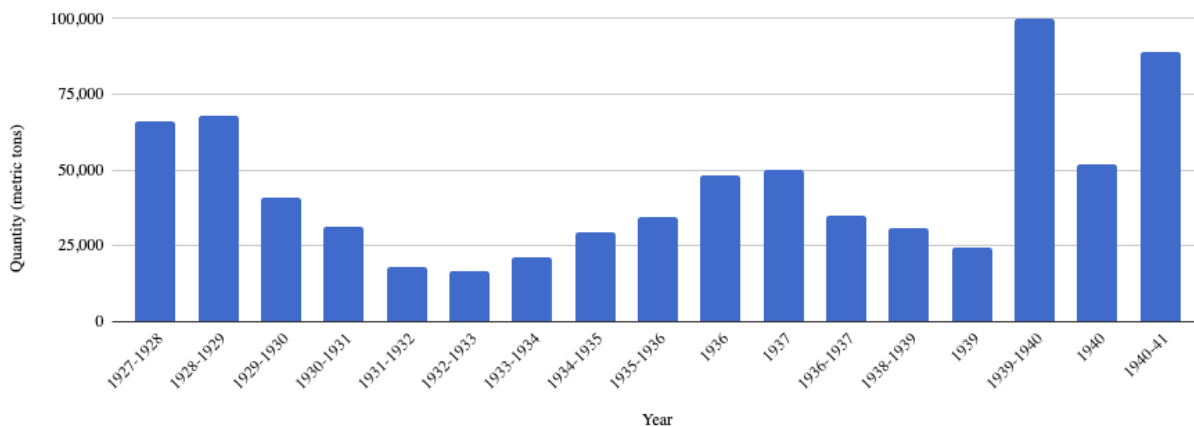
<sup>421</sup> Carleton Beals, *The Coming Struggle for Latin America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1938), 15, 24.

<sup>422</sup> J. Ramon Gutierrez A. to Ministro de Chile en el Japón, Oficio No. E 2/31/5/15, April 6, 1938, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1678, Archivo General Histórico, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores (hereafter RREE Archive).

Shortly thereafter, however, a Japanese state anxious to shed any lingering dependence on foreign raw materials and to supply its war effort in China (accelerating in 1937) enacted restrictions on foreign fertilizer and chemical commerce (and commerce in general) which narrowed the paths for Japanese nitrate consumption. A vulnerable western world increasingly alarmed by Japanese expansion also pressured Latin American states to relinquish ties with Japan. This chapter thus narrates when and why the seemingly limitless promise of Chile's Pacific vision, aspired to by Chilean diplomats since the 1880s, peaked before crumbling in the face of the global history of the 1930s and early 1940s.

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Chilean Nitrate Imported into Japan, 1927-1940s



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### *Japanese-Latin American Relations in the 1930s*

One of the most significant features of Japanese-Latin American relations in the 1930s was Japan's rising commerce in the region.<sup>424</sup> Latin America ran a trade deficit with Japan for the very first time in 1934 when Japan exported approximately 104,752,000 yen to Latin America and imported only 24,818,000 yen.<sup>425</sup> By 1939, Japanese total commerce with Latin America expanded to approximately 229 million Yen, with exports to Latin America outsizing

<sup>423</sup> These figures (compiled from many different primary sources) pick up from the figures in Chapter One. Sometimes, figures are given in terms of the calendar year and at others across two calendar years (as in, for example, 1935-1936) because countries established a fertilizer year (*año salitrero*) organized around planting and cultivation. For example, Chile's fertilizer year spanned July 1-June 30 while Japan's fertilizer year ran from August 1-July 31. I have been able to corroborate some of these figures across multiple sources, but in general I would consider these figures to be very accurate estimations because even in cases where I have competing figures for one year, the difference is often relatively minimal.

<sup>424</sup> Overall, Japan substantially expanded its infrastructure for commerce and diplomacy in Latin America with the founding of various parastatal institutions such as the Central Commercial Federation for Latin America (Federación Central de Comercio para América Latina) and The Japanese Latin American Society (Sociedad Latino Americana del Japón/Nippon Chunabei Kyokai) in Kobe, all of which worked to improve supply chains, hold commercial expositions, maintain stocks, and appoint representatives in Latin America.

<sup>425</sup> In this disproportionate balance, Chile's 3.5 million yen in exports to Japan ranked second in the region in value of exports to Japan behind only Argentina's approximately 12 million yen in exports. "Chile Asks Japan to Take Nitrates," *The Japan Advertiser*, February 7, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD.

exports to Japan by almost two to one.<sup>426</sup> The majority of the increase in exports to Latin America consisted of cotton textiles, manufactured machinery, and some silk goods.<sup>427</sup> This era marked a dramatically reversal since the late nineteenth-century when Latin American countries enjoyed the balance of trade with Japan.<sup>428</sup>

Japanese actors so aggressively pursued commerce in Latin America in response to various geopolitical concerns. Centrally, Latin America could fill the void in Japan's foreign commerce vacated by Europe and North America throughout the 1930s. Accelerating economic isolationism and regional integration in the Americas and Europe as war blanketed the globe in the 1930s came to interrupt many of Japan's former supply chains. Simultaneously, Anglo-American policy-makers gradually edged Japan out of global trading networks; actions which culminated in 1939 when the US terminated its 1911 commercial treaty with Japan.<sup>429</sup> Finding its export sector humming but increasingly ostracized from global trading networks, Japan turned to the yen bloc (mainland Japan and territories under Japanese occupation in the Pacific) and Latin America, which one senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official described as "client states," for supply and markets.<sup>430</sup> The Japan Central and South American Export Association (a parastatal institution formed in 1935 under the Japanese Department of Commerce and Industry) consolidated and ensured that all trade with Latin America aligned with state policy.<sup>431</sup>

Many Latin American states attempted to rebalance trade with Japan through steep import tariffs and barter agreements. One Chilean foreign ministry report from 1935 warned that the "threat" of Japanese textile imports to Chile required a "severe readjustment" of prices in order to prevent Japanese dumping.<sup>432</sup> Chile's Minister to Japan in 1940, Armando Labra, raised alarms over the "commercial hegemony" which "Japan is trying to throw over the countries of the Pacific and principally in Latin America."<sup>433</sup> So, deeply spooked by the reversal of balance of trade, Chile's Trade Control Commission in January of 1935 limited imports from Japan only up to the value of Chilean exports to Japan, primarily consisting of nitrate fertilizer.<sup>434</sup> Though some Chilean diplomats put a positive spin on the advance of Japanese manufactures by noting that Chile now obtained small manufactures of which it produced little locally (such as lightbulbs, glass, and tires) far more cheaply from Japan than from former suppliers in the US and Europe, Latin Americans grasped that they were a key target of the Japanese empire's commercial

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<sup>426</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 83/43, February 23, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>427</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 50, May 29, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD, 12.

<sup>428</sup> For more on Japan-Latin America trade in the 1930s, see Michiko Ikeda, *Japan in Trade Isolation, 1926-37 & 1948-85* (Tokyo: The International House of Japan Inc., 2008).

<sup>429</sup> Jorge Rosselot A., to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 71/44, May 13, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD.

<sup>430</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 19, February 15, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD.

<sup>431</sup> Eugenio Vidal to Chilean Nitrate Sales Corporation (Nee York), Oficio No. 175, December 4, 1935, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 124, Fondo Salitre, Archivo Nacional Histórico (hereafter ANH).

<sup>432</sup> Miguel Cruchaga to Señor Encargado de Negocios de Chile en Japón, Oficio No. 1, February 4, 1935, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1472, RREE Archive.

<sup>433</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, February 23, 1940, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1846, RREE Archive.

<sup>434</sup> Actors commented that this was the strictest trade control measure against Japan anywhere in South America. Memo, Oficio No. Unclear, No Date, 1935, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 69, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

agenda.<sup>435</sup> Nevertheless, by 1930 Japanese trade amounted to 5% of Chile's total foreign commerce.<sup>436</sup> Historian César Ross notes that "By 1930, Japan was the main commercial partner of Latin America and remained so until 1997, except, of course, during the interruption of the Second World War."<sup>437</sup>

Japan's escalating war in China and increasing isolation from western supply chains necessitated a particular focus on nitrogen and fertilizers as the state pursued economic self-sufficiency.<sup>438</sup> Japan's state at once hoped to promote and subsidize domestic production especially of sulfate of ammonia (in order to wean Japanese agriculture and industry off of foreign nitrogen imports) while simultaneously regulating all nitrogenous fertilizer production, imports, distribution, and consumption. The Japanese state fully nationalized fertilizer production, sales, and distribution in 1928 and by 1931 enforced strict import quotas and required authorizations to import any fertilizers.<sup>439</sup> By 1940, Japan's Diet founded the Japan Fertilizer Company Ltd. to entirely undertake the state's aggressive regulation of fertilizers.<sup>440</sup> Though Chile's relatively small share of Japan's nitrogen market relative to sulfate of ammonia and artificial nitrate produced in Germany, Britain, and the US enabled the Chilean product to mostly slide under the radar, Chileans in Japan predicted that it was only a matter of time before Japanese domestic manufacturers of synthetic nitrate replaced Chilean imports, thus prodding Chileans to sell as much as possible in the 1930s before time ran out.<sup>441</sup>

Despite the anxieties over Japan's commercial offensive in Latin America and its nitrogen controls, Chileans clung to the belief that their unique suite of critical goods (led by nitrate) lent Chile exclusive leverage to enforce equitable relations with Japan. Carlos de la Barra, a Chilean consul, contended in 1935 that "Chile has at Japan's disposal and to her advantage the raw materials she seeks for her increasingly industrial output. Therefore, in our own spheres of action, we can considerably help to make ends meet. The possibilities are there,

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<sup>435</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 57, October 5, 1934, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1420, RREE Archive.

<sup>436</sup> Roberto Deandracá Barbás, "Relaciones entre Chile y Japón: un siglo de acercamiento," *Revista del Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile* 154 (2006): 163.

<sup>437</sup> César Ross, *Chile and Asia: Essays on the History of International Affairs* (Ariadna Ediciones, 2022), 19.

<sup>438</sup> Other than interpreting the primary objective as economic self-sufficiency, Chileans struggled to diagnose the seemingly contradictory ideology guiding Japan's political economy. They could not reconcile the Japanese state's rhetorical opposition to socialism and allegiance to free markets with its increasingly universal economic intervention. Labra observed in 1940 that while Japan seemed ardently opposed to socialist threats to capitalist individualism, "there does not exist in Japan any important activity of any kind where the overbearing state is not invading everything." Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 94/49, March 3, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>439</sup> Alongside this "absolute" control of fertilizers, the Japanese state also planned to nationalize the iron, steel, and coal industries. Carlos de la Barra to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 100/20, March 12, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3667, ARNAD.

<sup>440</sup> The company focused most intently on producing and controlling sulfate of ammonia, calcium nitrate, and calcium superphosphate. The state funded 50% of the company's budget of 50 million Yen and appointed its top executives. The new company would directly oversee and authorize all fertilizer imports, sales, distribution, and organize manufacturing (chiefly to meet the domestic demand for sulfate and thus reduce reliance on foreign sulfate imports.) This company effectively nationalized fertilizer distribution in Japan and enforced the state's escalating fertilizer control laws throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The company also absorbed the formerly private sulfate producers (The Japan Ammonia Sulphate Company and The Phosphate Fertilizer Distribution Company), thus accelerating the state's control over ammonia production. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 212/117, May 30, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>441</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 76/38, February 17, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

and, I think, it is well worth the effort to develop them.”<sup>442</sup> Because Chilean nitrate offered a special utility to Japan that agricultural goods from Latin America’s tropical countries simply could not match, Chile possessed the unique leverage to balance trade with Japan “upon fair bases.”<sup>443</sup> In 1941, Labra asserted that Japan’s industries perfectly aligned with Latin America’s raw materials and that “Japan’s emporium has been broadly designed for the world and, in our case, for Latin America and for Chile.”<sup>444</sup> He added that Japanese political economy be “placed in unison with the commercial interests of Chile in the sphere of Pacific expansion.”<sup>445</sup>

### **Chilean Nitrate in the 1930s**

Meanwhile, the institutional turmoil of the nitrate industry taking place in Chile reverberated into the intuitions tasked with selling nitrate in Japan. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the 1930s saw the formation of the COSACH (Chilean Nitrate Corporation) and later the COVENSA (Corporation for the Sale of Nitrate and Iodine) as the two parastatal nitrate conglomerates that would steer the industry going forward. The COSACH briefly founded in Tokyo a Japanese subsidiary named the Chilean Nitrate Company/Chile Shoseki Kabushiki Kaisha (1931-1932).<sup>446</sup> British businessmen, Chilean representatives, Japanese agricultural engineers, and members of Mitsubishi’s Fertilizers Department operated the office.<sup>447</sup> The COSACH liquidated its subsidiary in Japan in April of 1932 only a year after its founding when the office failed to realize unrealistic sales quotas.<sup>448</sup> In August of 1936, the COVENSA opened an office in Tokyo named The Chilean Nitrate Agricultural Service Bureau which operated under the COVENSA’s New York office (which was called the Chilean Nitrate Sales Corporation).<sup>449</sup> Chilean attorney, Manuel Cuadros Cerda, directed the office as COVENSA’s official Delegate in the Orient and also was Commercial Attaché to the Chilean Legation.<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Carlos de la Bara to Tanzan Ishibashi, Oficio No. 206/128, November 27, 1935. Fondo RREE, Volume 3762, ARNAD.

<sup>443</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 15, February 2, 1935, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1472, RREE Archive.

<sup>444</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1940,” 1941, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1939, RREE Archive, 19.

<sup>445</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 56/25, January 31, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>446</sup> Since 1907 when the Nitrate Propaganda Association opened a sales office in Tokyo headed by British agronomists, marketing in Japan had been under the London headquarters of the various nitrate conglomerates. The committees of nitrate financiers in London faded in influence by the early 1910s, but British businessmen continued to work with Chilean diplomats, Japanese technical advisors and translators, and field representatives stationed in Japan and Korea to conduct the marketing. L.W. Richardson to Francisco Mardones, Oficio No. 41, February 17, 1937, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 182, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>447</sup> Hereford possessed over twenty years of experience in chemical industries in Japan and had represented the US firm, Allied Chemical Dye Corporation, in Japan. In 1931, the COSACH appointed him as its head representative in Japan (which included management of other markets in China, Australia, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines and India. “Organización en Extremo Oriente,” 1934-1935, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 69, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>448</sup> “Organización en Extremo Oriente,” 1934-1935, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 69, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>449</sup> It was not an accident or coincidence that the nitrate industry operated along a Tokyo-London-New York circuit. Indeed, Japanese historians have illustrated how it was precisely between 1890s and 1930s when Japan became a critical player in global finance and the networks established by banks based in New York, London, and Tokyo shaped global financial governance. Simon James Bytheway and Mark Metzler, *Central Banks and Gold: How Tokyo, London, and New York Shaped the Modern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016).

<sup>450</sup> Cuadros formerly worked for 24 years as an attorney for the firm Buchanan, Jones, and Co. Buchanan, Jones, and Co. to Manuel Cuadros Cerda, June 12, 1936. Fondo COVENSA, Volume 131, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

Leasing an office in the center of Tokyo's financial district, the Chilean Nitrate Agricultural Service Bureau restored hope for Chilean nitrate in Japan.<sup>451</sup> Despite the ongoing Great Depression and the industry's institutional turmoil, Chileans in Japan saw the founding of the Bureau as evidence that revitalized commerce lay just around the corner.<sup>452</sup> Carlos de la Barra, opined in 1936 that nitrate still "offers special characteristics in the Orient and, therefore, needs constant preoccupation. I believe, therefore, that the decision of [COVENSA] to establish itself in Japan will produce a very favorable change for nitrate commerce in this country and others which are included in its zone."<sup>453</sup> Chile's Sub-Secretary of Commerce Desiderio García in 1936, predicted that Japan could still become a market of "supreme importance" for Chile.<sup>454</sup> In 1940, Labra argued that Asian markets "for our country, are of extraordinary preponderance."<sup>455</sup> Cuadros himself wrote to COVENSA board chairman in New York, Kenneth Rockey, shortly after his arrival in Tokyo in September of 1936: "I find that there is a good deal of business to be undertaken here as Japan is, of course, the Key to the Orient."<sup>456</sup> Over the following years, the Bureau hired various well-credentialed Mitsubishi agronomists as advisors and translators to rejuvenate their marketing efforts.<sup>457</sup>

The COVENSA solidified its renewed presence in Tokyo by contracting with the Mitsubishi Corporation as the exclusive importer for Chilean nitrate in Japan and its occupied territories.<sup>458</sup> Already the Japanese trader which conducted the most commerce with Chile, Mitsubishi first concluded an exclusivity contract for Chilean nitrate with the COSACH in 1931 which they subsequently renewed with the COVENSA in 1934, 1937, and 1940 (the contracts spanned Japan's July to June fertilizer year).<sup>459</sup> These contracts stipulated minimum annual

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<sup>451</sup> Chile's Legation in Tokyo also formed a Commercial Council in 1940. Composed of Chilean diplomatic and commercial appointees, the body convened every Friday afternoon to assess the state of nitrate shipments, the possibilities of acquiring Japanese industries in Chile (such as fishing and tea cultivation), and the possibilities for selling other Chilean products in Japan such as wine, copper, and agricultural goods. Cuadros served as its president alongside Jorge Rosselot Aravena (Chilean consul in Yokohama) and Civil Attaché Guillermo de la Jara Montt (a representative of Chile's Caja de Crédito Minero—the state-founded mining regulatory agency) who was entrusted with developing copper commerce. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 182/100, May 13, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD. And "Consejo Comercial de la Legación de Chile en Japón, Sesión No. 1," May 17, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD. And "Consejo Comercial de la Legación de Chile en Japón, Sesión No. 4," September 23, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD.

<sup>452</sup> Chile also reformed its diplomatic representation in Japan. For decades, foreign businessmen headed many of Chile's consulates outside of Tokyo. But by November of 1933, Chile closed its consulate in Kobe upon determining that the practice of entrusting foreigners to advance Chilean commerce seemed unwise under the conditions of the global depression. It also grew increasingly difficult to find appointees with satisfactory knowledge of Spanish, Chilean industry, and Japan. Chile retained its consulate in Yokohama but placed it under the umbrella of its legation in Tokyo to further streamline Chilean representation in Japan. Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 6, November 6, 1933, Fondo RREE, Volume 3302, ARNAD.

<sup>453</sup> Carlos de la Barra to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 294/90, September 8, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3667, ARNAD.

<sup>454</sup> Desiderio García to Señor Ministro de Chile en Japón, Oficio No. 1098, May 3, 1935, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1472, RREE Archive.

<sup>455</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 86/45, February 23, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD.

<sup>456</sup> Manuel Cuadros to Mr. Rockey, September 8, 1936, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 152, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>457</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 212/117, May 30, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>458</sup> Mitsubishi assigned a T. Kuga as representative to Chile in July of 1933. Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 38, July 20, 1933, Fondo RREE, Volume 3333, ARNAD.

<sup>459</sup> Prior to these exclusivity arrangements, Chile's nitrate conglomerates sold freely to any Japanese firms willing and/or able to import. In the mid-1920s, for example, the Association of Nitrate Producers signed an exclusivity

tonnage (in agreement with the global nitrogen cartel) which Mitsubishi would sell throughout mainland Japan, Manchukuo, and Formosa for a small percentage in commission (usually about 3%).<sup>460</sup> The 1934 contract stipulated minimum sales of 30,000 tons which was elevated to 50,000-70,000 in 1937 and again to 90,000 tons in 1940 (dependent upon import permits annually fixed by the Japanese state).<sup>461</sup> The parties concluded the contracts through their respective New York offices through which Mitsubishi advanced COVENSA 85% of nitrate shipments in US dollars.<sup>462</sup> Mitsubishi opened a branch office in Chile in 1936 staffed by Japanese businessmen who previously operated Mitsubishi's office in Buenos Aires.<sup>463</sup>

Chilean and Japanese businessmen hoped that Chilean nitrate could meet Japan's broader demands for nitrogen which it formerly sourced from Europe. Japanese consumption could, as stated by the Japanese periodical, the *Miyako Shimbun*, offer "one of the measures to rehabilitate exports of [Chile's] most important product."<sup>464</sup> The *Tokio Nichi-Nichi* in January of 1940 discussed "Chile's hopes of securing a new export market to fill the gap left by Germany's withdrawal because of the war."<sup>465</sup> Chileans also hoped to supplant Japan's former "German markets that have been lost because of the war" and remained convinced that the "markets of the Extreme Orient are ripe for Chilean commercial expansion."<sup>466</sup> Labra described in 1940 that Chile was "envisioning... to replace the lost German markets for minerals, especially copper,

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contract for a minimum of 60,000 annual tons with Suzuki and Company in order to combat the efforts of other Japanese importers to unite to limit Chilean nitrate imports. After Suzuki declared bankruptcy in 1927 which initiated another period of free selling to various zaibatsu (namely Mitsubishi, Mistui, Okura, and Iwai). Mitsubishi and Mitsui both attempted to outmaneuver each other for nitrate imports. From 1928-1929, Mistui and the Association signed an exclusivity contract for 90,000 tons. However, the Anglo-Lautaro Nitrate Corporation (one of the largest in the Association consortium) laterally signed an import deal with Mitsubishi that prevented Mitsui from sourcing its required import tonnage. By July of 1931, the COSACH first signed a three-year exclusivity contract with Mitsubishi to purchase for 30,000 tons annually. Both parties extended through the 1936-1937 fertilizer year. L.W. Richardson to Francisco Mardones, Oficio No. 41, February 17, 1937, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 182, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>460</sup> The two parties signed and executed the contract through their New York agencies, rather than COVENSA agency in Santiago in order to avoid federal and state taxes levied against foreign companies conducting business in the US. COVENSA's New York branch was called the Chilean Nitrate Sales Corporation and was founded specifically to ease the bureaucratic and legal pathway to selling nitrate in the US. Carroll Wilson to Kenneth Rockey and Carlos Lee, April 12, 1934. Fondo COVENSA, Volume 069, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>461</sup> The contract also stipulated a minimum purchase of 10,000 tons of a similar product known as Chilean potassium nitrate. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 212/117, May 30, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>462</sup> Kenneth Rockey to COVENSA Santiago, Oficio No. 630, July 1, 1935, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 069, Fondo Salitre, ANH

<sup>463</sup> Mitsubishi replicated COVENSA's practice of appointing representatives in Chile who also were Japanese diplomats. For example, Mitsubishi named Japanese Minister to Chile, Teruo Miyake (who formerly directed Mitsubishi's office in Buenos Aires) as their lead representative in Chile and director of their office in Santiago. Martín Figueroa Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 228/63, June 29, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3700, ARNAD.

<sup>464</sup> "Nipo-Chilean Commercial Negotiations- Chile Desires a Barter Agreement," *Miyako Shimbun*, January 22, 1940. Anexo to Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 39/15, January 29, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>465</sup> "Trade Pact Being Made Between Japan, Chile," *Tokio Nichi-Nichi*, January 25, 1940. Anexo to Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 39/15, January 29, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>466</sup> "Memorandum: Creación de un Consejo Comercial Agregado a la Legación de Chile en Japón," Oficio No. 65, March 15, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD.

nitrate and salt, and also beans, vegetables, and fruit.”<sup>467</sup> When Canada banned copper exports to Japan (enduring the consequences of paralyzing two mines and about 1,800 workers) in October of 1940 in retaliation for the formation of the Axis alliance one month earlier, the *Japan Advertiser* commented that Japan would hardly feel the change because it “can import copper from Chile.”<sup>468</sup> Western economic sanctions and supply chains severed by war thus perhaps spelled opportunity for Chile and the Pacific vision.

Contracting with Mitsubishi enabled the Nippon Yusen Kaisha (the steamship company affiliated with Mitsubishi) to regularly ship significant portions of nitrate.<sup>469</sup> Though trans-Pacific shipping remained very expensive (shipping nitrate cost \$4 USD per ton in April of 1936), Chileans continued to argue that Mitsubishi’s capacity to sell “nearly unlimited” quantities of nitrate Japan, would ultimately justify the investment for any shippers willing to sign on. By the mid-1930s, Japan’s two largest shippers—Nippon Yusen and Kawasaki Kabushiki Kisen Kaisha (initiating regular service to South America in 1936)<sup>470</sup>—also introduced ships with refrigerated cargo space capable of transporting perishable Chilean agricultural products for the first time.<sup>471</sup> By 1940, the quickest, most modern ships reached Valparaíso from Yokohama in only thirty days, thus dramatically accelerating shipping schedules which even just a few years prior spanned between 44-54 days.<sup>472</sup>

Despite this thickening infrastructure for Chilean-Japanese commerce, Chilean nitrate contended with tough competition over Japan’s nitrogen market. One form of competition was Japanese and European production of ammonium sulfate (the most significant adversary for Chilean nitrate for decades).<sup>473</sup> Though long reliant on foreign sulfate imports, escalating state controls and subsidies<sup>474</sup> enabled Japan’s rise as one of the world’s leading producers of sulfate of ammonia by the late 1930s.<sup>475</sup> Tokyo’s *Chugai Shogyo* cited in 1936 that Japan supplied

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<sup>467</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 39/15, January 29, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>468</sup> “Canada Bans Shipment of Copper to Japanese Because of Alliance,” *The Japan Advertiser*, October 8, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD.

<sup>469</sup> By 1940, for example, NYK could carry around 3,000 tons of nitrate monthly (36,000 tons annually). The remainder was chartered by other Japanese and European shippers. Manuel Cuadros to Chilean Legation in Japan, “Memorandum,” May 17, 1940, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1844, RREE Archive.

<sup>470</sup> Jaime Lagos, *Chile and Japan: 100 Years of History* (1997). Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan, 44.

<sup>471</sup> NYK subcontracted various routes to the Americas with other national shippers. Its routes to Valparaíso and Callao, for example, were conducted by the US shipping giant W.R. Grace and Company.

<sup>472</sup> Toshitane Hara, (Inspector General for South America of Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha) to Cayetano Vigar Fontecilla, December 11, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 6675, ARNAD.

<sup>473</sup> Simultaneously, Chile’s elevation in the 1930s of tariffs on imports from France, Germany, Belgium, and Holland pushed these key nitrate markets to further produce their own synthetic nitrogen in retaliation. “French Nitrate Ban Hits Back at Chile,” *The Japan Times Advertiser*, December 25, 1931, Fondo RREE, Volume 3040, ARNAD.

<sup>474</sup> Some formerly private producers protested production restrictions on nitrogen and even changed their industry to avoid losing profits. Osaka’s Japan Nitrogen Company, for example, directed their plants to halt sulfate production and instead produce other industrial chemicals that were not limited by state controls. The Chosen Nitrogen Company likewise pivoted from sulfate to nitric acid production. Carlos de la Barra to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 128/29, April 7, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3667, ARNAD.

<sup>475</sup> Since the middle of the decade, a cartel of nationalized and private producers reached an annual production capacity of approximately 1,300,000 metric tons. In 1939, Japan imported just 24,639 tons of Chilean nitrate against, to give a couple of examples, 136,834 tons of sulfate of ammonia and 1,127,640 tons of vegetable oil cakes. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 212/117, May 30, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

16.8% of the world’s nitrogen which ranked second only to Germany’s 33.3%.<sup>476</sup> Europe’s ammonia production likewise surged.<sup>477</sup>

With Chilean nitrate secured with exclusivity contracts with Mitsubishi, the Mitsui Corporation—Mitsubishi’s largest competitor in Japanese foreign commerce—retaliated by contracting to exclusively import another key competitor for Chile: Arcadian nitrate (synthetic nitrate fertilizer produced by the US firm Allied Chemical and Dye Corporation) into Japan in 1932.<sup>478</sup> Mitsui and Mitsubishi subsequently waged price wars over foreign nitrogenous fertilizer throughout the 1930s, though Mitsui focused more on industry and Mitsubishi on agriculture. In 1936, for example, Mitsubishi sold 34,407 tons of Chilean nitrate in Japan (including 1,804 in Korea and 300 in China) and Mitsui sold 34,000 tons of Arcadian nitrate in Japan and 11,000 tons in Korea.<sup>479</sup> The competition between Chilean and Arcadian nitrate thus played out as a proxy battle among Japan’s two largest trading firms.

Chileans also fretted over the competition posed by Japanese-German cooperation. As mentioned in previous chapters, it was specifically German production of synthetic nitrogen (offering a cheaper and logistically simpler alternative to Chile’s product) that most robbed nitrate of its former consumers in Europe. With the Axis powers formed by 1940, Chileans in Japan reported on the arrival of many “German technical experts” lending knowledge in industries such as synthetic nitrogen.<sup>480</sup> One Chilean policy report elaborated: “Germany is now lending its formula to Japan which, with its intuition for progress, will utilize it for national defense and for self-sufficiency in the sphere of synthetic chemical products. Japan is a country that will dominate Asia with its industry... The Japanese people assimilate knowledge with astonishing ease, especially when their destiny depends upon that knowledge.” German-Japanese collaboration coupled with Japanese protectionism to accelerate the Chilean anxiety that “Japan, as a client of our nitrate... is escaping us.”<sup>481</sup>

Japanese Nitrogen Consumption Overall (metric tons)

	1932-33	1933-34	1934-35	1935-36
Sulfate of	942,000	990,000	1,180,000	1,377,000

<sup>476</sup> Carlos de la Barra to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 128/29, April 7, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3667, ARNAD.

<sup>477</sup> Europe produced 33,000 metric tons of nitrogen in 1913, but by 1929 German plants alone produced 667,000 tons of pure nitrogen. Enrique Gallardo Nieto to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Oficio No. 29, May 11, 1931. Anexo includes the article: “Chile Faces a Crisis in Nitrate Industry,” *The Japan Times Advertiser*, May 11, 1931, Fondo RREE, Volume 3040, ARNAD.

<sup>478</sup> Though nitrate actors previously considered contracting with Mitsui as their exclusive importer in the 1920s, they ultimately selected Mitsubishi for its offer of higher annual import tonnage. Nitrate actors also expressed misgivings about aligning with Mitsui who was already deeply involved in sulfate of ammonia distribution. However, both Mitsui and Mitsubishi played all sides of Japan’s fertilizer market in that both also imported and distributed foreign-made sulfate of ammonia and synthetic nitrogen. Santiago de Ossa to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 58/21, March 22, 1930, Fondo RREE, Volume 2870, ARNAD.

<sup>479</sup> Martín Figueroa Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 266/87, August 18, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3700, ARNAD.

<sup>480</sup> In 1940, the Japanese state formed the Japanese Organic Chemical Industry Foundation which aimed to heavily control and stimulate production of synthetic chemicals, such as nitrogen. This company was founded under similar controls and spirit as Japan’s centralized fertilizer production industry.

<sup>481</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 76/38, February 17, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

ammonia				
Cyanide	133,821	149,992	168,783	215,000
Compounds and Mixtures	150,000	200,000	275,000	429,000
Synthetic Nitrate (from German and Norwegian producers)	1,160	1,190	1,320	4,125
Arcadian Synthetic Nitrate (produced in the US)	13,280	13,560	15,440	32,500
Chilean Nitrate	15,552	19,369	29,316	32,724
Total	1,255,813	1,374,111	1,669,859	2,090,349

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Chilean Pacific visionaries responded with both alarm and resolve towards their competition. Montt, for example, anxiously admitted in 1935 that Japanese sulfate production “directly affects Chilean nitrate.”<sup>483</sup> Labra likewise feared in 1940 that Japan’s sulfate production posed “a problem for the future of our nitrate in the markets of the Extreme Orient.”<sup>484</sup> Nevertheless, Chileans conserved their hope that the demand “especially for types of fertilizer like ours, exceeds significantly [Japan’s] national production.”<sup>485</sup> Cuadros elaborated in that same year that the current “demand for nitrate is actually much higher than current sales; limited, as we have seen, by governmental import permits.”<sup>486</sup> This faith was not unfounded. For example, in certain years when silk prices rose and/or Japan’s sulfate producers fell short of output goals, nitrate quickly cleared its tonnage allotted by either the international nitrogen cartel or the Japanese government.<sup>487</sup> In other years when Japanese farmers suffered fertilizer

<sup>482</sup> Tabled copied from L.W. Richardon to Francisco Mardones, Oficio No. 41, February 17, 1937, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 192, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>483</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 103, November 4, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD.

<sup>484</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 94/49, March 3, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>485</sup> Carlos de la Barra to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 100/20, March 12, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3667, ARNAD.

<sup>486</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 212/117, May 30, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>487</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 113, December 7, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD, 5.

shortages, the Japanese state even subsidized small farmers' consumption of Chilean nitrate to avert agricultural slowdowns.<sup>488</sup>

This section of the chapter has illustrated that despite a deluge of challenges and the escalating interruptions to global shipping networks caused by the onset of war, Chile's Pacific vision arrived to the late 1930s intact and confident that a spike in nitrate commerce was just around the corner. The persistence of Chileans' efforts to link Pacific geography to their commerce in Japan perhaps could not have been more clearly articulated than by Labra's speech before the Pan-Pacific Club of Tokyo on December 8, 1939: "Japan extends itself on a long maritime area and so its destiny is to be found in the ocean. Chile, similarly, has around 4,000 kilometers of coastline so naturally its future is also on the same sea—the Pacific—the 'mare nostrum' of the world's occidental civilization. It is natural, therefore, [for Chile's and Japan's] destinies to have many resemblances and common interests."<sup>489</sup> Despite the challenges of competition, Japanese protectionism, and looming global war, the sales of and infrastructure for nitrate in Japan continued to rise across the 1930s.

*The 1937 Chilean Commercial Mission to Japan, China, and Manchukuo*

Throughout the 1930s, the Japan Central South American Trade Control Committee (which operated under Japan's Department of Commerce and Industry), organized official commercial visits to or from Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina.<sup>490</sup> These commercial missions aimed to establish and/or revise trade agreements and regularize Japan's acquisition of raw materials such as cotton, sugar, and coffee.<sup>491</sup> Though their results often failed to match their aspirational rhetoric, these splashy and highly-publicized visits nonetheless indicated the enthusiasm for Latin American-Japanese commerce that swelled in the 1930s even as Japanese relations with much of the rest of the Anglo-American-dominated world quickly deteriorated.

Japan financed a Chilean commercial mission to Japan, China, and Manchukuo in early 1937. Esteemed lawyer, president of the Chilean-owned South American Steamship Company, and influential Conservative Party member, Maximiano Errázuriz (appointed the title of Temporary Ambassador), led a delegation of twelve Chileans composed of a senator (one of whom was the brother of current Chilean Minister to Japan), officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance, the President of the Society for Manufacturing Development, the Inspector General of the National Budget, the Secretary General of COVENSA, and several accompanying family members.<sup>492</sup> The party departed Valparaíso on February 28, passed briefly though the Peruvian and Ecuadorian coasts, enjoyed extravagant diplomatic festivities for two days in Havana, and then traveled by rail from Miami to San Francisco where they boarded a Japanese ship, the *Asama Maru*, and departed for Japan on April

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<sup>488</sup> COVENSA sold nitrate to Japan at 5.5 Yen for 10 kan (about 37.5 kilograms) while the Japanese state (which strictly controlled prices) sold it at 4.23 Yen/10 kan. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 212/117, May 30, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

<sup>489</sup> "Discurso del Ministro de Chile en el almuerzo en su honor dado por el Pan-Pacific Club de Tokyo, el 8 de diciembre de 1939," included as anexo to Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 410/94, December 9, 1939, Fondo RREE, Volume 1761, ARNAD.

<sup>490</sup> Carlos de la Barra to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 141/33, April 18, 1936, Fondo RREE, Volume 3667, ARNAD.

<sup>491</sup> "Trade Mission to be Sent to S.A. Countries," *The Japan Times and Mail*, June 20, 1935, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 069, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>492</sup> Errázuriz would also be elected as a senator and served as Director of the Compañía Sudamericana de Vapores (a Chilean steamship company who signed a contract as the agent in Chile for the NYK line in 1937-38). Raul Rivera Blin to Martín Figueroa, November 14, 1938, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1678, RREE Archive.

1.<sup>493</sup> One report dispatched from Santiago summarized the aspirations of the coming mission in explicitly Pacific visionary terms: “banked on the same Great Ocean and having modern maritime transportation and efficient means of exchange and communication” Chile and Japan could now bring the project of Chilean-Japanese relations to life.<sup>494</sup>

As the *Asama Maru* approached Yokohama on April 15, the Chileans received an opulent welcome. Countless Japanese officials, translators, a “swarm of reporters,” and crowds of school children waving Chilean and Japanese flags (one of several occasions in which school children were displayed in pageantry for the Chileans) joined the thousands of people filling the Yokohama dock’s two platforms. A small fleet of cars whose hoods were painted in Chilean colors transported the visitors to their lodging at Tokyo’s Imperial Hotel (which had hosted many Chileans over many decades). Many government buildings also flew the Chilean flag and Japanese authorities wore lapels with intertwined Chilean and Japanese flags.<sup>495</sup>

Over the following weeks, the Chilean delegation (accompanied by COVENSA representatives and other Chilean diplomats in Japan) held a series of meetings in English with Japanese authorities in Tokyo and Osaka to resolve the sticking points of Chilean and Japanese commerce.<sup>496</sup> President of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Chokuro Kadano, led a cohort of approximately 76 individuals from the Japanese ministries of foreign relations, agriculture, commerce and industry, and executives from many of Japan’s leading firms dedicated to foreign commerce.<sup>497</sup> Centrally, the Japanese demanded that Chile rescind its firm reciprocity trade controls which they accused of uniquely discriminating against Japanese commerce. Japanese authorities even threatened retaliation against nitrate imports should Chile uphold trade controls and such high import duties.<sup>498</sup>

After many slogging and often tense negotiations, the Chilean and Japanese delegates agreed to co-found the Nipo-Chilean Society (*Nichi Koyokai*) which would be headquartered in both Tokyo and Santiago and could arbitrate commercial disputes, streamline communication, facilitate cultural exchange, and ease the transfer of credit between Chilean and Japanese banks.<sup>499</sup> The Chileans agreed to consider import tariff reductions for Japanese goods (as long as imports did not threaten domestic manufacturers) in exchange for increased Japanese consumption of minerals (such as nitrate, copper, and manganese). The Chileans also invited Japanese investment in their copper and iron industries, (though this was delicate as Japanese

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<sup>493</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 7-10.

<sup>494</sup> Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile to Señor Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Japón, February 26, 1937, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1605, RREE Archive.

<sup>495</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 10-12, 21-25.

<sup>496</sup> The two sides convened for conferences in Tokyo on April 17, 20, 23 and on May 4, 5, 8 in Osaka.

<sup>497</sup> “En Santiago y Tokio serán establecidas Sociedades Chileno-Niponas para estrechar las relaciones Culturales y Económicas,” *La Nación*, June 28, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>498</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 12-21.

<sup>499</sup> The Japanese Latin American Society (Sociedad Latino Americana del Japón/Nippon Chunabei Kyokai) in Kobe also worked to institutionalize and develop commerce across the Pacific. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 231/129, June 6, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4422, ARNAD.

federal law currently required the state to authorize any capital leaving the country *and* because Japanese finance capital could antagonize British and US investors in Chilean copper).<sup>500</sup>

Following a month of intensive negotiations softened by tours through many historical, industrial, and military sites in Tokyo and its agricultural peripheries, the Chileans departed for Japanese-occupied China on May 14 onboard the NYK-owned *Nagasaki Maru*. Unsure of what to expect and “full of curiosity,” the Chileans arrived to an animated welcome celebration in Shanghai on May 16 before touring Nanking, Peking, and the surrounding regions. With “all of our efforts in the economic sphere in China concentrated on nitrate,” commented Errázuriz, “as an agricultural country, [China] could be a phenomenal market for nitrate once they eliminate the barriers” for its importation, accumulation of stocks, and propaganda. Meeting with the Association for Foreign Commerce of China, the Chileans outlined how nitrate consumption would provide interrelated benefits of increasing Chinese agricultural yields while opening Chile as a new consumer for Chinese commodities (such as silk products and tea).<sup>501</sup> These Chileans thus hoped to overcome previous mishaps and challenges of “attaining brilliant results in Japan” while “abandoning the Chinese market...and the market in Manchuria.”<sup>502</sup>

Several weeks later, the Chileans “unofficially” (because Chile had not recognized Manchurian statehood) visited Manchuria where they stumped for nitrate for ten days beginning on June 1.<sup>503</sup> The Chileans visited Mukden (one of Manchuria’s principal cities where Japan staged the infamous Mukden Incident to justify an invasion of the region in September of 1931), the port city of Dairen, and Hsing-king (Manchuria’s new capital). Furthermore, the Chileans hoped to ally with the powerful Japanese-owned South Manchuria Railroad Company which, in addition to directing the state’s rail lines, conducted the majority of the Manchuria’s commerce.<sup>504</sup> Errázuriz stated that this firm—a key agent of Japanese empire—“would be decisive for the penetration” of nitrate in Manchuria. If Japan’s textile factories in Manchuria could also import Chilean wool, the Chileans indicated that Chile could import from Manchuria soybean seeds from which to produce oil. The Chileans culminated their time in Manchuria’s capital with festivities at the Japanese embassy.<sup>505</sup>

As these events proceeded under the guise of normalcy, Chileans partially reflected on the reality that they encountered China and Manchuria in the midst of a brutally violent Japanese invasion and an ongoing war. Errázuriz described how “the terrible conflict with Japan had reduced entire neighborhoods to rubble” in Shanghai’s formerly splendid, economically vibrant city. He further detailed how Manchuria’s “independence is a fiction. Manchukuo is totally and

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<sup>500</sup> “Recomendaciones adoptadas por la Conferencia Comercial Nipo-Chilena, el 8 de mayo de 1937 en Osaka.” Anexo No. 3 to Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 40.

<sup>501</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 27-30.

<sup>502</sup> Errázuriz also concluded that the Japanese control over the region relied on Chinese complacency towards conquest because otherwise the Japanese would not be able to control a region with such difficult terrain and aggressive winters. *Ibid.*, 30-34, 36-37.

<sup>503</sup> Actors on both sides predicated an uphill battle for nitrate to compete with locally produced soybeans (Manchuria’s principal fertilizer) but Mitsubishi officials indicated that they would attempt to utilize nitrate to cultivate beans for their large sugar refinery in Manchukuo. Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 34-35.

<sup>504</sup> Errázuriz quantified the firm’s capitalization at 700 million yen and estimated its workforce as 170,000 individuals.

<sup>505</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 35-37.

absolutely run by the Japanese....Unsatisfied with only that conquest, [the Japanese] have extended their occupation southward to Peking and Tietsin and seemed very threatened when we passed through there.” Manchkuo’s officials, furthermore, “were not indigenous and almost without exception were Japanese...Almost all of Manchuria’s population is Chinese who don’t have access to public administration and are governed very severely by their Japanese masters.” Chileans also observed that commerce in Manchuria proceeded through Japanese military governors (rather than through traders in Tokyo) who, according to one report from 1935, “do not want the fruits of their labor to be taken by the capitalists of the metropole. They do not look kindly upon business that goes through Tokyo.”<sup>506</sup> Conducting commerce in Manchuria, the Chileans understood, equated to conducting commerce with the Japanese imperial and military establishment.<sup>507</sup>

The Chileans departed China through the port city of Harbin before traveling for seven days via train to Moscow from where they returned to Chile through Europe. Because, like with Manchuria, Chile did not possess official relations with the Soviet Union, the Chileans knew little of Russia and thus entered the country full of curiosity. They found the train ride “enormously interesting” and the land very beautiful, but scorned the severity of the region’s poverty and oppression. Indeed, they commented on the many “outcasts” who boarded their train enroute to “die in forced labor in sinister oriental Siberia.” They found Moscow unimpressive and labeled Russia as “having progressed least any of the great European capitals.” The Chileans also noted the extensive infantry and military equipment accumulating on Russia’s eastern border. Thus, without quite realizing it, these Chileans enthusiastically consumed the sights and sounds of Japan, Manchuria, and the Soviet Union on the brink of that region’s eruption into one of world history’s deadliest moments.<sup>508</sup>

*Asia America*, (a monthly journal on geopolitics and commerce circulating since 1935 and edited by Venezuela’s Consul General in Japan) published a special issue commemorating the Chilean economic mission in 1937.<sup>509</sup> Various Chilean and Japanese actors contributed short articles to the issue that articulated their Pacific vision for peace, prosperity, and Chilean-Japanese realtions.<sup>510</sup>

Chilean consul General, Carlos de la Barra, refuted any suggestions that “Latin American markets of the Pacific are not of any great importance to the Empire of Japan. This, we must say, is a gross error; on the contrary, the important industrial countries of the world, with

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<sup>506</sup> Sergio Montt to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 113, December 7, 1935, Fondo RREE, Volume 3550, ARNAD, 11.

<sup>507</sup> COVENSA also began selling small quantities of nitrate in Tientsin (Japanese-occupied territory) by the early 1940s. C. Fujino to Chilean Nitrate Agricultural Service Bureau, Oficio No. 21, October 28, 1940, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 606, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>508</sup> Maximiano Errázuriz to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. A3-0-31-1-52, October 6, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD, 38-39.

<sup>509</sup> *Asia America* published in English, Spanish, and Japanese specifically for an audience of traders and firms involved in commerce between Latin America and “almost all important buyers and sellers in Japan, Manchukuo, and China.” Venezuelan Consul to Japan, Carlos Rodríguez Jimenez, edited the journal in Tokyo and the editorial staff was comprised of diplomats from all over Latin America.

<sup>510</sup> The issue also displayed an image of the several professors and ten students (wearing kimonos) from the University of Chile’s Department of Agronomy and Veterinary Science who visited Japan in March and April of 1937. A cohort of students and two professors from the University of Chile’s Law School also visited Japan in February of 1938. Departamento Diplomático (of Chile’s Foreign Ministry) to Señor Ministro de Chile en el Japón, Oficio No. 1/8/6/8/25, April 5, 1938, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1678, RREE Archive.

the sole exception of Japan, have fought bitter trade battles for those markets, both to develop their latent potentialities as buyers and to secure their immense resources in raw materials.”

Chuichi Ariyoshi, Vice-President of Japan’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, also published an article welcoming the Chilean mission. Ariyoshi contended that though “divided by tens of thousands of miles of ocean waters...all of our people are now looking to South American countries in a new and truer light than before with great interest and concern.” He praised South America’s vast wealth in natural resources and undertaking of the necessary development to participate in foreign commerce. “Firmly convinced” that durable profits in Chilean-Japanese commerce were imminent, Ariyoshi also pointed to the compatibility of Pacific geography: “The progress of Oceanic transportation has conquered the long-distance sea-routes. Chili is now a country just on the opposite shore against this country. If we mutually stretch out our hands there is nothing that will hinder their approach.” Ariyoshi thus explicitly sourced the promise of Chilean-Japanese commerce to geographic compatibility.<sup>511</sup>

President of Japan’s Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Chokuro Kadono, wrote: “Chile, country of nitrate, and Japan, country of silk: one situated in the extreme southwest of South America, and the other a group of tightly-formed islands in the Asiatic sea have in common, despite the immense distance that separates them, their place in the Pacific Ocean and workers busily making the foundation for the future of Pacific civilization...Chile is enduringly imprinted in the hearts of the Japanese people.” Kadono elaborated that Japan’s sparse land and overpopulation compelled it to become an exporter of manufactures and an importer of natural resources: “I sincerely believe that Japan and Chile will achieve a notable improvement in their economic relations to mutual benefit.”<sup>512</sup> Iwao Kawaguchi, President of the Mercantile Pacific Trading Ltd. (a key firm in Chilean-Japanese commerce) also celebrated Chile’s and Japan’s “many similarities” that nourished Japan’s “special tradition of friendship with Chile.”<sup>513</sup> As seen in this issue of *Asia America*, the Pacific vision was appearing to come to life.

During the Chilean Economic Mission’s circulation of Japan, they visited the port city of Nagoya which simultaneously was hosting a massive exhibition on commerce and internationalism. Named the Nagoya Pan-Pacific Peace Exposition and organized by local and prefectural officials and chambers of commerce, this exhibition hoped to display before the world Nagoya’s contribution to the accomplishments of Japanese commerce and modernity. Occupying nearly 500,000 square meters, the exhibition halls were arranged by theme (such as culture, art, industry, science, agriculture, mining, health, etc.) or by company, region, and/or nation. A multinational committee of judges genially awarded medals for the most impressive materials and displays which best embodied the internationalist spirit underwriting the exposition.<sup>514</sup> The city even constructed a new train line to transport guests between exhibition sites centered around a massive, recently-built “peace tower” located on immaculately manicured exhibition grounds.<sup>515</sup> Exhibition organizers hoped to further the cause of Pacific peace and

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<sup>511</sup> Chuichi Ariyoshi, “A Welcoming Message to the Chilean Economic Mission,” *Asia America* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 3-4. Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>512</sup> Ryuzo Asama, “Al recibir la misión comercial Chilena,” *Asia América* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 15-16 Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>513</sup> Iwao Kawaguchi, “Mensaje de bienvenida a la misión económica Chilena,” *Asia América* Vol. II no. 23 (April 1937): 17-18 Fondo RREE, Volume 3793, ARNAD.

<sup>514</sup> Isao Oiwa to COVENSA Santiago, May 30, 1936. Fondo COVENSA, Volume 131, Fondo Salitre, Archivo Nacional Histórico. 2847

<sup>515</sup> The Exhibition Commissioner's Office, Nagoya Municipal Office, Nagoya, Japan, “Nagoya Pan-Pacific Peace Exhibition News No. 2,” May 15, 1936, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 131, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

internationalism right when Japan was escalating its invasion of China and all-out war seemingly loomed over the world's every horizon.

Regarding Chile and Latin America, organizers proclaimed that recent improvements to Nagoya's port would enable direct trans-Pacific shipments (formerly most Nagoya products arriving to Latin America departed from other Japanese ports). Kurowa Itoh, Director of the event and Director General of the Nagoya Products Export Association for Latin America, even traveled to Santiago to personally invite Chilean participation in the conference free of charge (participation otherwise entailed a scaling fee to reserve exhibition space). Itoh even conferred with Mitsubishi officials on the display of Chilean products "in order to obtain the best success in the exhibition and propaganda of Chilean nitrate."<sup>516</sup> Occupying twenty-six square meters within the South and Central American Hall, Chilean displays consisted of nitrate, agricultural products (barley, wheat, wines, etc.), and mineral products (particularly copper and coal). The Nagoya exhibition thus embodied before a global audience the visions for peace and prosperity in the Pacific that Japanese and Chilean actors had articulated for their two countries since the 1890s.

### **Wartime and the Gradual Collapse of the Pacific Vision**

But the course of Chilean-Japanese relations hinged in late 1937. As described above, the Chilean-Japanese Economic Mission coupled with the Nagoya Pan-Pacific Peace Exposition to illustrate how Chilean-Japanese relations enjoyed their most thickly institutionalized articulation supported by increasing state-sponsorship and peaks in nitrate shipments. Yet, these encouraging celebrations of internationalism and commerce obscured the geopolitical fissures widening elsewhere in the Pacific: hostility between the Pacific's two empires—Japan and the US—would soon decide the fate over any Chilean effort to build and sustain trans-Pacific relations. Not only would escalating naval activity severely restrict shipping routes with the opening of the Second World War's Pacific theatre after December 1941, but it became increasingly difficult for nitrate actors to execute payments (formerly conducted through their banks and branch offices in New York, Tokyo, and Santiago) once the US government froze Japanese assets in July of 1941.<sup>517</sup> And within East Asia, the Japanese military's accelerating march into China—represented most violently and notably with the Nanjing Massacre in December of 1937—also closed off the pathways for trans-Pacific commerce as the Japanese state thereafter committed little interest and resources to operations which did not directly support the war effort.

Other wartime disruptions to Japan's foreign commerce included the absorption of labor into the military, rising production costs, Allied economic blockades, and tightening state trade controls that aimed to channel all Japanese commerce into military purposes. C. Fujino, Manager of Mitsubishi's Fertilizer Department, aptly summarized the conundrum in October of 1937: "we could have sold a considerable amount of [nitrate] had the exchange permission been available. Unfortunately, however, the expansion of the fighting area in China and adverse balance of trade against Japan has made it necessary for the government to apply very strict exchange controls on all imports excepting direct requirements from Army or Navy."<sup>518</sup> This section of the chapter

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<sup>516</sup> Kurowa Itoh to Carlos De La Barra, February 15, 1937, Fondo RREE, Volume 3940, ARNAD.

<sup>517</sup> Chilean diplomats often had to personally lobby their US counterparts to free up Japanese credits in the US in order to complete previously determined purchases of nitrate or iodine in US dollars. Florencio García to Sr. Presidente de la COVENSA, No. 14/41, August 8, 1941, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 543, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>518</sup> C. Fujino to Manuel Cuadros, Oficio No. 212, October 20, 1937, Fondo Salitre, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 186, ANH.

details this complicated collapse of Chilean-Japanese relations and the Pacific vision after 1937 as the Pacific came to host a world war.

Though draped in liberal internationalist rhetoric, the Nagoya Exhibition embodied the tense coexistence of multiple visions of international relations competing over the Pacific's future. Indeed, Japanese domestic and foreign policy by the 1920s primarily advanced what is known as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (which aimed to cordon off an Asian bloc of self-sufficient nations under Japanese tutelage autonomous of Anglo-American influence).<sup>519</sup>

However, not all Japanese leaders endorsed militarized imperialism as the basis for Japanese international leadership. Commercially-minded provincial actors in Nagoya, for example, aspired to distinguish Japan as a custodian of what historian Nathan Hopson calls "capitalist peace."<sup>520</sup> Antagonistic towards the exposition's internationalism, federal and army officials only authorized the event to proceed with the inclusion of a hall celebrating national defense, the display of military equipment, and live military demonstrations. After 1937, therefore, the state would channel many of its semi-autonomous political economic networks previously involved in, for example, conducting commerce with Chile or organizing internationalist commercial fairs, exclusively towards its effort to conquer Asia. Through the vision for world order represented by the Co-Prosperity Sphere, Japanese officials outlined an interpretation of geopolitics in which a sympathetic Japan under siege from a predatory Anglo-American world order was justified in expanding in order to protect itself and East Asia.<sup>521</sup> In other words, the conflictive internal proceedings of the Nagoya exposition anticipated the looming geopolitical conflagrations in the Pacific.

Chilean nitrate-businessmen had long forecasted a clash between the US and Japan. As early as 1909 journalist and Chilean Nationalist Party co-founder, Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, painted US-Japanese antagonism "one of the most serious problems that the world will have to face because it is a question of two powerful races who will have to air out their nascent hatred over the Pacific through a war of immense size."<sup>522</sup> In 1913, Minister to Japan, Alfredo Irarrázaval, described how "relations between Japan and the US [are] in a state of acute crisis. War, for a few moments, seemed imminent. The world was preparing to witness a new duel of the races."<sup>523</sup> In 1914, a Chilean Legation report from Tokyo commented that "Those who attentively observe the international politics of the civilized world have long thought that the rivalry between Japan and the United States is so great and both states would desire to exert their forces to have hegemony in the Pacific."<sup>524</sup> Chilean Minister in Japan, Francisco Rivas Vicuña, assessed in 1917 that the elevation of the rivalry between Japan and the United States "will come after the [the First World War]. Japan knows it and does not want to be unprepared to meet it in good condition."<sup>525</sup> The aforementioned Mitsubishi executive, Fujino, likewise opined in April

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<sup>519</sup> Cemil Ayden, "Japan's Pan-Asianism and the Legitimacy of Imperial World Order, 1931-1945," *The Asia Pacific Journal* 6 no.3 (March 2008): 1-33.

<sup>520</sup> Nathan Hopson, "A Bad Peace?: The 1937 Nagoya Pan-Pacific Peace Exhibition," *Japanese Studies* 38 no. 2 (2018): 137-151.

<sup>521</sup> Hopson, "A Bad Peace?: The 1937 Nagoya Pan-Pacific Peace Exhibition."

<sup>522</sup> Tancredo Pinochet Le-Brun, *La conquista de Chile en el siglo XX* (Santiago: Imp. Litografía y Encuadernación "La Ilustración," 1909), 23, 35-36.

<sup>523</sup> Alfredo Irarrázaval to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, "Estudio sobre la inmigración japonesa en Asia y América," Oficio No. 15, January 20, 1913, Collection 463, Fondo Histórico, RREE Archive, 9.

<sup>524</sup> Francisco Herboso to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Chile, Oficio No. 1, January 9, 1914, Volume 472A, Fondo Histórico, RREE Archive.

<sup>525</sup> Francisco Rivas Vicuña to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, "Memorandum," October 22, 1917, Fondo Histórico, Volume 760. RREE Archive, 27.

of 1940 that “The war in Europe now seems impossible to confine itself to the area of that continent alone... Statements issued by our Premier and the American Secretary of State already herald the things to come in preserving the peace and neutrality in the Pacific.”<sup>526</sup> In 1941, Labra worried that “a conflict in Pacific waters, which is not far off” would only exacerbate the logistical challenges of Japanese-Latin American commerce.<sup>527</sup>

Beholden to the US for investments and for their largest trading partner, but also unwilling to relinquish the promises of their Pacific vision with Japan, Chileans actively debated which side to choose in this seemingly imminent US-Japan war.<sup>528</sup> In a short book entitled, *The War Between the United States and Japan and its Relation to Chile*, published in February of 1941, Inspector General and Division General of the Chilean Army, Francisco Javier Díaz, far from forecasted a certain US victory. Díaz analyzed the escalating military mobilizations on both sides and concluded that “the United States has little chance of imposing its will against [Japan].” Upon surveying Chile’s strategic options, Díaz advised Chileans to remain “mere spectators” and rebuff US desires to open military bases in Chile as to “avoid antagonizing Japan, with whom new relations are promised.” Indeed, he cited how Japanese-Chilean commerce had recently tripled owing to Britain’s naval blockade that stripped Japan of many former trading partners. Chileans should keenly observe, Díaz suggested, the impending conflict between the US and Japan “because it is not unrelated to South American interests and, consequently, those of Chile.”<sup>529</sup> Chileans certainly possessed sufficient geopolitical savvy to continue to placate the US and preserve their commitment to the League of Nations by refusing to recognize Manchurian statehood. Yet, it was not a foregone conclusion even in 1941 that the US was the right horse to back in the Pacific’s inter-imperial conflict in which Chileans saw themselves as invested participants.<sup>530</sup>

Chilean Pacific visionaries thus delayed any disavowal of Japan and expressed little repulsion or aversion towards Japanese imperialism specifically because Japanese war-making and empire potentially entailed robust opportunity for Chilean nitrate.<sup>531</sup> In 1933, Medley Whelpley, a senior Guggenheim nitrate executive, (in shortened cable speak) anticipated revived nitrate sales to the Japanese, US, or Russian militaries: “while take all [war] rumors with a grain of salt, it would be distressing to miss any war orders and nitrate circles seem see possibilities in

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<sup>526</sup> Fujino explicitly referenced Germany’s occupation of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) as ushering the European conflict into the Pacific. C. Fujino to Manuel Cuadros, Oficio No. 17, April 22, 1940, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 606, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>527</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1940,” 1941, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1939, RREE Archive, 82.

<sup>528</sup> Chile was one of Latin America’s leading recipients of US finance capital. In 1931, for example, Chile led all of Latin America in receiving \$422 million of US finance capital. “Chile Making Bid for World Industry,” *The Japan Times*, June 29, 1931, Fondo RREE, Volume 2304, ARNAD.

<sup>529</sup> Francisco Javier Díaz, *La Guerra Entre Los Estados Unidos i el Japón: En sus relaciones con Chile* (Santiago: Imprenta La Sud America, 1941).

<sup>530</sup> El Salvador, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic were the only Latin American states to recognize Manchukuo’s statehood. Costa Rica was the only of these who was not a member of the League of Nations.

<sup>531</sup> The Chilean public also weighed in on Japan’s invasion of China. Historian Pedro Iacobelli illustrates how 75% of the 8477 responses sympathized with China when the periodical, *Ercilla*, offered a paid sweepstakes in August of 1937 inquiring whether Chileans supported China or Japan in Asia’s incipient war. Iacobelli asserts that the many Chilean readers overwhelmingly preferred China because they saw a reflection of Chile’s anti-imperialist experience in China’s anti-imperialist struggle against Japan. Pedro Iacobelli, *De cara a Asia: pautas en la relación chilena con Japón y China, 1880-1940* (Santiago: Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros Arana, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, 2023). Carleton Beals also noted that Japanese violence in China provoked grievances and animus among Latin American workers. Carleton Beals, *The Coming Struggle for Latin America*, 34.

all of the above.” The nitrate industry should thus remain “especially on alert for any war orders” from Mitsui or Mitsubishi.<sup>532</sup> Labra similarly urged Chile to step up to fill the voids in Japan’s foreign commerce vacated by the Allies: “the circumstances favor us and our country can now, better than at other opportunities, reach a commercial treaty with Japan that brings significant benefits for our commerce... The time has come for our country to get everything it can out of the situation.”<sup>533</sup> Labra further instructed Santiago in 1941 to further establish and preserve their legal ties with Japan “because once the international horizon clears, it would be imprudent to not have any Nipo-Chilean juridical links when the bases of international peace of the current war are settled because the Extreme Orient is an interesting market for Chilean nitrate.”<sup>534</sup>

Chileans even assured Mitsubishi that their products “could be distributed arbitrarily by Japan, how and where it liked... what interested [the COVENSA] was the commerce overall.”<sup>535</sup> Cuadros even predicted in 1938 a “vast market” for nitrate in Japanese-occupied territory in North China where he hoped Santiago would give the order to “prepare the ground for the possible demand for our products.”<sup>536</sup> The promise of nitrate commerce, even to directly fuel Japan’s imperial and military agenda, thus outweighed for Chileans and other nitrate actors any moral implications of hitching their wagon to a violent empire arousing international animus.<sup>537</sup>

In late September of 1941—just weeks before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor—Japanese officials toured six journalists from leading Chilean periodicals around Japan and Manchukuo, and South and North China. Touring the region until mid-December, the Chileans visited various factories, steamship companies, firms, periodicals, and shrines; and met with some of Japan’s highest foreign and military policy makers and press. While in Tokyo, the Chileans even visited the Yasukuni Shrine—the highly controversial memorial for all Japanese soldiers who perished in war. They spent approximately a week in Shanghai during which they received a tour of Nanjing. Their itinerary for December 7—the day of the Pearl Harbor attack in Japan—has the Chileans returning by rail to Tokyo before their departure several days later. That Chilean press spent weeks galivanting across the Japanese empire right when the Pacific theatre of the Second World War burst open, reveals how Chileans seemed to express little repulsion towards Japan’s militarism and Chile’s potential complicity via commerce, splashy press tours, and continued relations.<sup>538</sup>

Nitrate actors were thus deliberate in their commitment to commerce in Japan despite the onset of the Second World War. Cuadros asserted in early 1940 that the prospects for nitrate

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<sup>532</sup> Medley G. B. Whelpley to Kenneth Rocky, February 27, 1933, Fondo Medley Gordon Britain Whelpley, Volume 62, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>533</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en Japón, 1939,” March 12, 1940, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1846, RREE Archive, 26, 39.

<sup>534</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1940,” 1941, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1939, RREE Archive, 23.

<sup>535</sup> Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 457/223, November 15, 1940. Fondo RREE, Volume 4422, ARNAD.

<sup>536</sup> Manuel Cuadros to COVENSA Santiago, Oficio No. 87/38, January 25, 1938, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 192, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>537</sup> In May of 1941, the COVENSA even floated replacing Mitsubishi as their agent for nitrate distribution in China and Manchukuo with a German-owned firm that was long established in China—Carlowitz and Company—which would then also sell Chilean nitrate in Germany. In other words, the Chileans even looked to Germany as a strong potential market without concern for the implications of commercially aligning with Germany. Florencio García to Manuel Cuadros No. 26/41, May 26, 1941, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 636, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>538</sup> “Scheduled Program of the Chilean Press Party in Japan Proper, Korea, Manchuria, South and North China,” Received October 29, 1941, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 500, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

“decidedly turned for the better” because of Japan’s inconsistent sulfate of ammonia production and the state’s effort to increase wheat and barely yields (in which nitrate performed particularly effectively). In that year, the Japanese state authorized an emergency increase of Chilean nitrate imports (up to 100,000 tons) to counteract expected deficiencies in sulfate and agriculture.<sup>539</sup> One Mitsubishi agronomist working for the COVENSA reported “no cause for uneasiness as regards the market for Chilean nitrate.”<sup>540</sup> In July 1941, the COVENSA even concluded a fresh contract to increase the NYK’s portion of nitrate shipments, and thus hopefully reduce the quantity of cargo space that the COVENSA required to charter elsewhere.<sup>541</sup>

Japanese actors celebrated Chile’s neutrality in the Pacific war. Vice President of the Federation of Japanese Exporters for Latin America, Heijiro Kato, outlined in 1939 how “among the many Latin American nations that have adopted some measures against Japan, Chile is one of the few that keeps their doors open for us Japanese and our merchandise.” Kato thanked “the Chilean people for their accurate understanding” of “the situation through which Japan has been obliged to pass whose ultimate goal is the eternal peace of the Orient and the peace of humanity.”<sup>542</sup> Saburo Nango, President of the Federation of Associations of Japan-Latin America Exporters and Importers, contended in 1940 that Japan’s industry and Latin America’s commodities “have the opportunity to establish an almost perfect trade—one without conflicts or competition—and we only need to wait for these factors to continue as the basis for the our relations to expand even further in the future.”<sup>543</sup> Another official from Japan’s Board of Information hoped in 1942 to reassure any skeptical Latin Americans: “Japan harbors no intention whatsoever of hostile character towards South America...[Japan] is trying, even during the hostility, to make still closer the economic relations with the various countries of South America.”<sup>544</sup> Japan thus promised Chile non-aggression, profitable relations, preservation of shipping routes using Japanese or neutral ships, and an attempt to alleviate the economic challenges of wartime.<sup>545</sup>

However, despite this enthusiasm and continued commerce, Chilean and Japanese businessmen simply could not continue business as normal for much longer. In 1938, just one year after Japan’s full-scale invasion of China and other nations’ efforts to economically isolate the belligerent Japan, Japan’s overall trade value diminished by 21.2%. Similarly, the value of Japanese exports to Chile declined by 42.9% and imports from Chile fell by 24.2%. The value of

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<sup>539</sup> Manuel Cuadros Cerda to Señor Ministro de Chile en el Japón, Oficio No. 3, January 16, 1940, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1844, RREE Archive.

<sup>540</sup> Y. Yamakita, Chilean Nitrate Agricultural Service Bureau, “Memorandum,” July 2, 1940, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 585, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>541</sup> The new contract committed NYK to ship 36,000 long tons (2,240 pounds) of nitrate to Japan across the following fertilizer year (July to June). The text of the contract (signed by Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha on behalf of COVENSA) is included as an anexo to Manuel Cuadros to COVENSA Santiago, Oficio No. 21/41, July 28, 1941, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 587, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>542</sup> Anexo of speech included in: Martín Figueroa to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio de Chile, Oficio No. 182/67, May 17, 1939, Volume 1761, RREE Archive.

<sup>543</sup> Saburo Nango quoted on pg. 7 of Armando Labra Carvajal, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, 1940,” 1941, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1939, RREE Archive.

<sup>544</sup> “Statement of the Spokesman of the Board of Information Concerning the Neutral Countries of South America,” January 19, 1942, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2048, RREE Archive.

<sup>545</sup> Dozens of Japanese institutions and individuals also remitted nearly 46 million yen (approximately \$12.5 million USD) to Chile in support after an earthquake devastated the central-southern region of Chillán in January of 1938 which killed approximately 30,000 people. Armando Labra Carvajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en Japón, 1939,” Oficio No. 126/71, March 16, 1940, Fondo RREE, Volume 4421, ARNAD.

nitrate purchases fell from in 4,391,422 yen in 1936 to 2,271,733 yen 1938. Figueroa lamented that due the consequences of war, “the commercial links between Chile and Japan have suffered a visible alteration.”<sup>546</sup> Escalating naval activity in Pacific by the 1940s also turned nearly any commercial shipping a highly dangerous proposition.

By mid-1942, the Chilean government initiated the recall of COVENSA and its Caja de Credito Minero representatives from their Japanese postings.<sup>547</sup> Mitsubishi shortly thereafter terminated their own relations with COVENSA and the Chilean Nitrate Agricultural Service Bureau as orders from the Japanese state demanded that all of their efforts meet exclusively wartime goals. By mid-1942 Chile recalled its diplomats and businessmen from Japan.<sup>548</sup> The manager of Mitsubishi’s fertilizer division, C. Fujino, penned a regretful letter to his Chilean colleagues which aptly captured how actors self-consciously lamented that war seemed to draw the Pacific vision to a close:

It is a great regret indeed for the writer as well as for all of your friends in our company to have to see you off shortly. All of us cannot but feel sorry that the present world conditions do not permit our nitrate business to be carried on as was planned and desired by you and ourselves. We, however, would like to strongly impress upon you that no matter what may happen, the pleasant relation that has existed between your Corporation and Mitsubishi for many years neither can nor will be disturbed, and we are in a firm belief that whenever the time comes our business will immediately be resumed, and efforts will be made not only to rebuild the big market for your products but also to recover what is lost during the war...As for the future plan of nitrate business in Japan and other parts of the Orient, we feel it is still too soon to figure anything concrete, inasmuch as the present war is changing...and only God knows the post-war conditions of the world...We sincerely hope that the present world conflagration may not last long so that we shall have a chance at reunion in the near future.<sup>549</sup>

So just as quickly as the Pacific vision seemed to be materializing, it just as quickly began to evaporate by late 1942.<sup>550</sup>

These actions culminated on January 22, 1943, when the Chilean senate voted to terminate Chile’s diplomatic relations with Japan and every Axis power.<sup>551</sup> (Though Chile did

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<sup>546</sup> Martín Figueroa, “Memoria de la Legación de Chile en el Japón, correspondiente a 1938,” March 8, 1939, Fondo Histórico, Volume 1761, RREE Archive, 14, 21.

<sup>547</sup> Indeed, Chilean officials feared that Japan would eschew the West’s protocols establishing diplomatic immunity during wartime and that mounting racial hatred for “whites” strongly endangered Chilean representatives. Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 26, March 25, 1942, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2049, RREE Archive.

<sup>548</sup> Legación de Chile en el Japón, Oficio No. 44, November 21, 1942, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2049, RREE Archive.

<sup>549</sup> C. Fujino to Manuel Cuadros, May 26, 1942, Fondo COVENSA, Volume 345, Fondo Salitre, ANH.

<sup>550</sup> Ariel Takeda, Naomi Hirose, Maria Teresa de Senda, “Los Inmigrantes Japoneses y los Nikkei Chilenos: Perspectiva General Histórica,” Sociedad Japonesa de Bienficiencia, Proyecto Internacional Investigación Nikkei, Comisión PIIN-Chile, 2000. Accessed at JICA (Japan International Cooperation Association) Library, Yokohama, Japan. And Roberto de Andraca Barbás, “Relaciones entre Chile y Japón: un siglo de acercamiento,” *Revista de Estudios Internacionales* 39 no.154 (2006): 165.

<sup>551</sup> Chile’s senate approved the measure proposed by Chilean Foreign Minister, Joaquín Fernández. Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive.

not official declare war on Japan until April of 1945).<sup>552</sup> The Japanese government interpreted the rupture of relations as a declaration of Chilean hostility: the following day, Japanese police occupied the Chilean Legation and confined Chile's current minister, Armando Labra, and his family to supervised house arrest for the following eight months. Japanese agents prohibited Labra from communicating with Chileans in Santiago who were evidently unaware of his detainment and his reportedly very poor treatment. Evidently, Labra and his family carried out various plots in which his daughter (who worked as a secretary for Chile's legation) donned Japanese disguises to evade the guards and sneak communications through medical personnel to other foreign diplomats to inform Santiago of their situation.

Negotiation over the treatment and repatriation of Chilean individuals and property lasted until mid-September 1943.<sup>553</sup> Negotiated by Swiss diplomats in Tokyo, Labra and approximately fifty Chileans joined dozens of other Latin Americans among 1,500-1,600 other foreign (mostly US) nationals as part of the second official US-Japanese repatriation.<sup>554</sup> The repatriates departed Yokohama onboard a Japanese ship, the *Teia Maru*, on September 13 and arrived in Mormugao, India on October 19 where they were exchanged for Japanese diplomats and citizens.<sup>555</sup> When Labra bid farewell to a Japanese official and former employee of the Chilean legation who had been assigned to oversee the departure of the Chileans, Mr. Okura, he lamented that "the link between the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Minister of Chile were completely liquidated."<sup>556</sup> Labra could not have conveyed any clearer the end of the promise of Chile's Pacific vision in Japan.

### Conclusion

This chapter has narrated how the Chilean-Japanese nitrate chain (and the Pacific vision more broadly) very briefly peaked quantitatively and became its most thickly institutionalized right before US-Japanese relations deteriorated into war and ruptured Chile's project for commerce with Japan. Chileans diverged from many of their Latin American neighbors in seeking and tightening relations with Japan from the late 1930s and onwards and only terminated relations with Japan only once truly compelled to do so by wartime conditions. That the US remained a quantitatively more important trading partner for Chile than did Japan, and because Chile inhabited an international order in the western hemisphere in which they could not really turn against the US, Chile was ultimately compelled to break with Japan. Historian Roberto Deandraca Barbás even posits that Chile's severing of relations with Japan "Had nothing to do with being against Japan. It was the pressure of the United States, the acts of solidarity among

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<sup>552</sup> Mario Barros Van Buren, *La Diplomacia Chilena En la II Guerra Mundial* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 1998).

<sup>553</sup> Switzerland played a large role as neutral mediator and executor of prisoner exchanges throughout the Pacific war. See Sarah Kovner, "War of Worlds: Allied Captivity and Swiss Neutrality in the Pacific, 1941-1945," *Diplomatic History* 41 no. 4 (2017): 719-746.

<sup>554</sup> Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 40-50.

<sup>555</sup> The Japanese ship *Teia Maru* made port in Shanghai, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore and eventually Mormugao, India by October 19 where the exchange took place. In Mormugao, the evacuees transferred to a Swedish-built but US-owned ship named the *Gripsholm* which the US government utilized from 1942-onwards to exchange and repatriate nationals with the Axis powers. The *Gripsholm* transported the Chileans to Rio de Janeiro and then another transport returned them to Chile. Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 40-50.

<sup>556</sup> Armando Labra Carbajal to Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores y de Comercio, Oficio No. 2, October 22, 1943, Fondo Histórico, Volume 2152, RREE Archive, 38-41.

the countries of [the Americas], and the political action of certain sectors of the left that brought about the suspension of bilateral relations.”<sup>557</sup>

Though many of the same prewar institutions attempted to restore commerce between Chile and Japan after 1945, US occupation officials blocked the importation of Chilean nitrate in favor of US-produced synthetic fertilizer. In other words, once the US captured uncontested hegemony in the Pacific, its officials obstructed commercial visions for the region that did not align with their own.

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<sup>557</sup> Roberto Deandraca Barbás, “Relaciones entre Chile y Japón: un siglo de acercamiento,” *Revista del Instituto de Estudios Internacionales, Universidad de Chile* 154 (2006): 164.

## Conclusion

This dissertation has told an international history of Chile and Latin America in the Pacific World. Beginning in the 1890s, actors in Chile and Japan viewed the Pacific as vast, open, and relatively distant and autonomous from North Atlantic imperialism, and thus ripe for the construction of new international relationships. Capitalizing on the requisite emerging technology and interest necessary to sustain links between Latin America and Japan, Chileans set about assembling the infrastructure for what I term a Pacific vision. Chilean and Japanese Pacific visionaries founded new steamship lines to wean themselves off British and US shippers and deployed networks of diplomat-businessmen. Self-consciously intending to immunize the Pacific from North Atlantic imperialism, Chileans cast themselves alongside Japanese as regional protagonists. They asserted that they were uniquely qualified to lead an autonomous Pacific in the twentieth century and to capitalize upon that work for development and prosperity at home. Chilean Pacific visionaries simultaneously pursued Japanese immigration, and potentially even Japanese firms, to take up nitrate production and resolve the industry's debilitating labor shortages. Though never reaching the scale forecasted, Japanese nitrate consumption steadily increased and enabled commerce in other Chilean goods such as copper and wool.

But things started to change by the 1920s. In the middle of that decade, US Guggenheim firms purchased majority foreign control in Chile's nitrate industry, which dovetailed with the general US usurpation of British influence in South America. Simultaneously, Japan had forged in the intervening decades a violent and formidable empire of its own aspiring to compete with the US empire in the Pacific. So while still centered around an admiration of Japanese economic modernization and a desire to sell nitrate in Japan, Chilean nation-building in the Pacific shifted by the 1920s and 1930s from a rejection of British interventionism, to preserving neutrality in the region as a way to stake out agency in Chile's foreign affairs. By the 1930s, the North Atlantic powers joined the Japanese empire both in abandoning liberal internationalism and in pursuing instead regional dominion and economic integration in Latin America and the Pacific. These forces converged and contributed to igniting the Second World War.

Undeterred by Japanese war-making in the 1930s and 1940s, Chileans persisted in their quest to harness Chilean development to commercial and diplomatic relations with Japan. They preserved their belief that Chile was a protagonist in this remaking of Pacific order that could still withstand North Atlantic incursions and inter-imperial conflict. It was only once Chile officially terminated relations with Japan in 1943 and Chileans abroad found themselves the targets of Japanese animus, did they conclude Japan to be a liability for international society. Up until then, however, my Chilean actors articulated scant objections to their complicity in Japan's imperial project. The Second World War thus shrunk the vastness, opportunity, and autonomy of the Pacific of the 1890s and 1900s to a violent imperial standoff in the 1930s and 1940s which eventually gave way to US hegemony in the region after 1945. Chile's Pacific vision ultimately shared the fates of many other Marxist and post-colonial visions for remaking the world that were to be bludgeoned or sidelined by imperial reaction and the polarities of the ensuing global Cold War.

I build several key arguments and interpretations throughout this dissertation. First, I divert from the scholarly trend of viewing Latin American nation-building through the shadow of North Atlantic imperialism, by illustrating how Chileans sought to integrate with Japan in the Pacific as they pursued development and as a method for contesting North Atlantic power. Second, I argue that some Chileans' visions for commerce, labor, and sovereignty through relations with Japan mapped onto and intensified local and national contests over Chile's future already taking place at home. Animated debates particularly over potential Japanese labor immigration, and a fear of miscegenation, illustrate that Chile's social question was deeply shaped by how Chileans positioned themselves in the world. I thus introduce racial and international concerns into scholarly conversations on Chile's nation-building that often focus exclusively on class or gender within predominantly national frameworks. And finally, the story of the Pacific vision links the nineteenth-century era of Latin American history defined by the proliferation of export-driven development models to the rise of nationalist movements in the 1920s and 1930s. Seen through the Pacific vision project to turn Japan into a, if not the, principal international relationship for Chile, this transition was neither smooth nor sudden (that is, emerging only with the Great Depression) and it was not a foregone conclusion that it would be the US who would outlast Britain and Japan to capture unchallenged dominance in Latin America and the Pacific.

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