

Socheolas

Limerick Student Journal of Sociology

Volume 4, Issue 1

Remitting faith practices. Comparing the experiences of two indigenous towns in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Evelyn Aguirre-Sulem

April 2012

**University of Limerick
Department of Sociology**

Available at <http://www.ul.ie/sociology/socheolas/vol4/1>

ISSN 2009-3144

The Department of Sociology, University of Limerick, welcomes applications for post-graduate study

- MA in Sociology (Applied Social Research): <http://www.ul.ie/sociology/ma.html>
- MA in Sociology (Youth, Community and Social Regeneration): <http://www.ul.ie/sociology/ycsr.html>
- MA in Gender Culture and Society: <http://www.ul.ie/sociology/gcs.html>
- PhD by research: <http://www.ul.ie/sociology/researchdegrees.html>

Remitting faith practices. Comparing the experiences of two indigenous towns in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Evelyn Aguirre-Sulem

PhD Candidate, Department of Sociology

University of Warwick

For many years it was assumed that the characteristics of indigenous people - e.g. permanence and immobility (Weber 2008, Cadena and Starn 2007, Yescas Angeles 2008) - made them irrelevant to the study of migration. Indigenous people in Mexico were portrayed as related to the country side, with folkloric traditions and remaining in their community of origin due to their lack of human capital. However, indigenous people have always been in motion and their experiences of migration have undoubtedly reshaped their communities of origin. This work compares the socio-cultural remittances related to the establishment of different faith or religious practices and their impact at the individual and institutional level in two indigenous towns in Oaxaca, Mexico: the Mixtec town of Santiago Cacaloxtotec and the Zapotec town of San Bartolomé Quialana. By looking at the migrants' communities of origin as well as their different migratory experiences, this work shows how the transformative quality of religious remittances has led to the questioning and reorganisation of pre-established conceptions of religious, ethnic and gender identity at the local level.

Religious practices/ideas 'travelling' across social and geographical borders

Human migration always involves transformation. Along with the physical migration of people, symbols are translated, cultures come into dialectical relation and new conceptions of communities and identities emerge. In short,

individuals, groups and cultures clash and meet; events that change the lifestyles of both those migrating and those remaining.

Oaxaca is a state located in south western Mexico with 1.2 million indigenous inhabitants, the Zapotecs and the Mixtecs being the two main indigenous groups in the state¹ (INEGI 2010) and the ones with the highest rate of out-migration to the United States (US) at national level (see Cornelius et al. 2009, Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004, Velasco Ortíz 2005). Indigenous Oaxacans generally migrate within Mexican territory or to the United States (see Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004, Stephen 2007, Cornelius et al. 2009) in search of employment and, even though they find themselves outside of their communities, many Oaxacans maintain strong links with their hometowns while at the same time settling into their host communities. It could be said that indigenous Oaxacans migrate carrying their communities on their backs (Hernández-Díaz 2011, p. 13). This happens due to the particular social configuration of Oaxaca, where the community or *pueblo*² plays a fundamental role, making indigenous Oaxacans the quintessential transnational movers (Cohen et al. 2009).

With the money earned, many Oaxacans send remittances to their relatives in Oaxaca to outfit their households and communities with basic consumer goods and pay for their relatives' education and for various social events (e.g. weddings, birthdays, etc.). Thus, the most 'visible' impact of migration is in the changing economic conditions of their communities and families, however, another important, but perhaps less visible, transformative aspect of their

¹ In the state of Oaxaca sixteen indigenous groups coexist and cohabit: Amuzgos, Chatinos, Chinantecos, Chocho, Chontales, Cuicatecos, Huaves, Ixcatecos, Mazatecos, Mixes, Mixtecos, Nahuatls, Popolucas, , Triquis, Zapotecos y Zoques (Hernandez Diaz 2007, p. 37). Indigenous groups have been classified based mainly on the characteristics of their language.

² The community in Oaxaca is understood as a collectivity whose members have rights and responsibilities of participation in the social and political processes of their towns (Hernandez-Diaz 2011, p. 13).

movements are the socio-cultural messages/remittances that are 'sent' home (Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011). These socio-cultural messages are the focus of this paper. Specifically, I examine the relationship between socio-cultural remittances and the establishment of different faith or religious practices in the Mixtec town of Santiago Cacaloxtotec (or Cacaloxtotec) and the Zapotec town of San Bartolomé Quialana (or Quialana). Arguing that differences in migration experiences (e.g. different destinations, networks, languages, cultures) play a key role in the kinds of social remittances that emigrants send home and in the kinds of impact(s) these social remittances have, I compare the different experiences and outcomes of two indigenous Oaxacan towns which are popularly assumed to be religiously homogenous. Although the towns differ in their style of government, in both communities it is difficult to separate religion from culture and every-day activities and, in both, the local state plays a key role in organising religious life.

Just as ideas, practices and identities move across borders, religious ideas/practices also 'migrate' and in so doing radically transform not only the lives of migrants but also the people and institutions left behind (Vertovec 2004). Therefore, this work brings to the fore the transformative quality of religious ideas/practices that 'travel' across social and geographical borders. It is not this work's endeavour to analyse social-religious remittances in terms of the spiritual transformation of individuals (those who migrate and those who remain) but in the sense of how religion is understood, shaped and utilised in the transnational migration process (Tibe Bonifacio and Angeles 2010, p. 4). The work presented here is based on on-going field work in Cacaloxtotec and Quialana, as well as in the state of California, USA, which commenced in August 2010³.

³ The work here presented is part of a PhD in Sociology at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom. In the state of California, I carried out my field work in the cities of

Aquí nos enseñaron a venir (We were taught to come here)

Mexico contains a rich variety of indigenous groups who have always been in motion within and outside Mexican territory. Because ethnic groups and sending communities vary tremendously even within the same state or region, understanding the communities from which indigenous migrants come is key to the analysis of their movements and its impacts. To contextualize the intersection of religious practices in the study of indigenous Mexican migration, I compare Cacaloxtotec, which has a long history of migration to the outskirts of Mexico City (Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, Chimalhuacán, Chalco and Ecatepec), and Quialana, which has established a mature line of migration to greater Los Angeles and Orange County in the USA.

Santiago Cacaloxtotec belongs to the Mixteca⁴ region and is located 14.5 km south of the city of Huajuapán de León. Cacaloxtotec has 1,498 inhabitants (INEGI 2010) but in fact no more than 600 inhabitants currently live in the community⁵. Cacaloxtotec is governed by 'mixed practices' which involve the election of its body of government through political party competitions, but in practice the execution of government is based on traditions and customs strongly linked to the Roman Catholic Church. Cacaloxtotec has an economy based on small-farm production, but was also known as one of the main centres

Anaheim, Los Angeles, Fresno, Madera, and Stockton. I received the approval of the Ethics Committee at the University of Warwick for this field work in May 2010. The names of the interviewees have been changed to protect their identity.

⁴ The Mixteca region is located in the central part of Mexico in the states of Puebla, Guerrero and Oaxaca. In Oaxaca the Mixteca region includes the districts of Silacayoapan, Huajuapán, Juxtlahuaca, Coixtlahuaca, Nochixtlan, Teposcolula, Tlaxiaco, Putla and Jamiltepec, which incorporate 189 municipalities overall (Hernandez Diaz 2011, p.14).

⁵ Despite its relatively proximity to Huajuapán de León, more than 60 percent of the population speak Mixtec. While the adult population still uses the language, children and teenagers understand the language but no longer speak it.

of hand-woven straw hat production. In the late 1970s, Cacaleños⁶ joined the stream of migration to the industrial agriculture sector of the north-west part of Mexico (see Velasco Ortiz 2005). During the same time, men and women from Cacaloxtotec started to migrate to urban areas of Mexico, and this is still going on today. In the outskirts of Mexico City, most Cacaleños live and work in the service industry as shoe polishers and street vendors in the case of men and as nannies, cooks and street vendors in the case of women. Cacaleños have been migrating internationally⁷ for less than twenty years. Currently there are approximately 60 Cacaleños working in the US and 5 in Canada. Those Cacaleños who migrated to Canada did so under seasonal agricultural contracts, whereas those who migrated to the US did so as undocumented workers and are concentrated in the service industry⁸. Contrary to internal patterns of movement, in which female migration has an important presence, only three Cacaleñas women have migrated internationally.

The Zapotec town of San Bartolomé Quialana is located around 40 km from Oaxaca City in the *valles centrales* (central valley). Quialana has 2,470 inhabitants who belong to and identify with the Zapotec ethnic group⁹. The town elects its representatives by the regime known as customary law (see Vázquez García 2011). This system has undergone important transformative processes in recent years, leading the general assembly in 2010 to elect a female health officer for the very first time. Labour opportunities are scarce in Quialana. The majority of its inhabitants are peasants who cultivate for self-

⁶ People from Santiago Cacaloxtotec.

⁷ Referring to emigration out of Mexican territory.

⁸ Cacaleños in the US are sparsely distributed across California, Oregon, Utah, Florida, New York and Virginia.

⁹ While virtually all people from Quialana are bilingual (Spanish and Zapotec), communication within the social and political arenas is done through Zapotec.

consumption and for retail sale in the Tlacolula market. Opportunities unrelated to agriculture are even scarcer. Thus, Quialeños'¹⁰ main source of income is the immigrants that work in the US, who are overwhelmingly undocumented men¹¹ (Monografía del Pueblo de San Bartolomé Quialana 2005, p.13). After having first migrated largely within Mexican territory (mainly to Chiapas and the north-western parts of Mexico), Quialeños began migrating to the US in the mid 1970s. The first Quialeño migrants to the US worked in the agriculture sector, but no more than a decade later following the growth of the service industry in the main cities of the US at the end of the last century (López and Rusten 2004, Paris 2008), Quialeños moved into the American restaurant and gardening industries.

To keep or transform the tradition?

Both communities have long been zealous and protective of their local and religious traditions. Indeed, this has even led to violent moments, when some have decided to practice a different expression of faith. Like many other indigenous communities, Cacaleños and Quialeños are predominantly Roman Catholic, a tradition which has endured in large part because of the strong ties between the church and the community government¹² (see Sandoval Forero 2008). Over time new expressions of faith have been accepted and practised in Quialana but not in Cacaloxtotec. Although both towns have experienced

¹⁰ People from San Bartolomé Quialana.

¹¹ Most Oaxacan migrants are men (Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004, p. 25). Nearly 80 percent of all migrants from the central valley are men (Cohen et al. 2009, p. 18).

¹² The link between the government and the Roman Catholic Church is represented by the "alcalde" (mayor). Although the "alcalde" does not have specific political powers, apart from being in charge of the organization of Roman Catholic activities, he/she also carries out similar functions to the British register. Moreover the alcalde is chosen by the municipal president.

important emigration, this has impacted the towns and their respective religious ideas and practices in very different ways.

Cacaleños main destination has been either Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl (aka Neza) or Ecatepec, both working class areas established by rural Mexicans in the outskirts of Mexico City (Prieur 2008, p. 26). “*Almost all Cacaloxtotec is there, one can even speak Mixtec*” mentioned a Cacaleño. In Neza and Ecatepec everyone is or was a migrant, so the presence and arrival of newcomers is a part of local life. Without diminishing the difficulties that Cacaleños are confronted with for being indigenous, Oaxacans and migrants (Bartolomé 2008, p. 42), as well as the high level of discrimination that still reigns in Mexico against indigenous peoples (Oehmichen Bazán 2005), Cacaleños migrating to these urban centres are relatively secure (i.e. in comparison to undocumented workers), since they remain in their country and, thus, do not live under the threat of deportation. Cacaleños migrating within Mexico also have the opportunity to travel back to their communities on a regular basis, at least once a year during the town festivity of Saint *Santiago Apostol* in July.

For people from Quialana, the picture is very different. Given that the US is their main destination, Quialeños encounter a receiving community that tends to diminish the value of undocumented migrants (Cohen et al. 2009). In trying to find a sense of belonging and integrate into the host communities, Quialeños associate with groups of people that share a similar identity. In the US most of the groups or associations where Quialeños meet have a religious connotation. Thomas Tweed (2006, p.54) defines religion as “*confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and comfort suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries*”. Tweed views religion as a community formation and as a refuge from suffering, characteristics that ease the integration of the newcomers into the receiving

community (Levitt 2007). In this regard Quialeños contrast with Cacaleños who have not created any kind of community-based association in the outskirts of Mexico City. Religion has been both a path to integration and belonging and also as a way to remain an active member of his/her community from abroad. An example of this is *Jóvenes Unidos por Cristo* (Youths United by Christ), a religious group that works as a transnational bridge for immigrants (see Ruiz-Navarro 2010). Pablo, one of his members stated:

[Speaks in Zapotec] "As you know we speak another "dialect" that is Zapotec. Our purpose here tonight is to share God's word in Spanish as well as in our "dialect" and so we grow spiritually in God's world. We are a group of young people, Youths Unified by Christ. Marcos told us that you [referring to me] were in my town [San Bartolomé Quialana] and that you guys know people there. We are also part of the people from there but the only difference is that we live here in the US but it is the same movement, right? It is the same movement" (April 09, 2011, Anaheim California).

The group was originally established in Anaheim California by people from Quialana and now is of vital importance not only to the Roman Catholic Church but also to the infrastructure of Quialana in general. With the money collected by those who belong to *Jóvenes Unidos por Cristo* in Anaheim, the local government has built a basketball court, repaired the church building and bought computers for the secondary school, among other improvements. The group, however, remit more than money. It has recently engaged in 'social remittances' by sending evangelisers from the US to organise retreats and religiously orientated talks to those who remain in the town. In the future, the group aims to send a psychologist to specifically offer counselling to women who have husbands in the US.

Seen by the host community as “other” and with the vulnerability of being undocumented, many Zapotec Quialeños are arguably the perfect candidates for conversion by religious groups that not only offer humanitarian aid but also seek to evangelize them (Oxford 2010). The establishment of the Christian Evangelical Church in Quialana can be traced back to a Quialeño migrant who left the town as a Roman Catholic in the 1980s, but through his contact with Pentecostal Christians in the US was converted. The migrant affirms to have had a direct experience with God, who asked him to come back to Quialana to “spread the only truth”. Before coming back to his town the newly converted migrant managed to evangelise his relatives and convince them to join him in the journey back to Quialana. With high resistance from the town’s inhabitants, the Evangelical Church was established in 1995. Currently the Evangelical Church has approximately 200 active members, but five founders have since separated and established a messianic¹³ group which is managed transnationally from the US.

Religion and its practices are both transnationally and nationally produced (Levitt 2007, p.117) and, in both communities, some new expressions of faith and religious practices have also been introduced by those who remain in the community or by missionaries. Mission work in the state of Oaxaca by non-Roman Catholic denominations has not been as successful as it has been in the states of Chiapas or Estado de Mexico where many indigenous communities were 're-converted'¹⁴ through the work of American and European missionaries (Martínez García 2005). Cacaleños still recall the presence of an American

¹³ The Mesianic group in Quialana (3 people) and in the US follow the Old Testament more closely and recognise Christ as the Messiah.

¹⁴ Let’s not forget that indigenous people in the America were originally forced to practice Christianity. In Mexico this was represented by the Roman Catholic Church.

Evangelical missionary couple in the late 1970s who even translated the Bible into Mixtec. The work of these 'modern day' missionaries was unsuccessful and up until today Cacaloxtotec remains strongly, actively and traditionally Roman Catholic¹⁵ with no more than 15 Cacaleños registered as belonging to other denominations (e.g. Jehovah Witness and Pentecostal Christians). Cacaleños who practice a different faith attest to having been converted by missionaries when travelling to the nearest city, Huajuapán de León. The relative proximity of migrant Cacaleños in Mexico City to their home town (six hours by bus), as well as the fact that Roman Catholicism is linked to the rights and responsibilities of community citizenship, are some of the factors that have kept Cacaloxtotec religiously homogeneous. The importance of community citizenship in Cacaloxtotec is exemplified in the ritual of marriage. For instance, as soon as someone gets married¹⁶ (inside or outside Cacaloxtotec), the mayor (*alcalde*)¹⁷ assigns the newly-wed couple a *cofradía*¹⁸ to which they have to contribute money and work until they die. Although living outside the town, Cacaleños still remit money to their *cofradías* and come back for the celebration of the saint. If members of the *cofradía* fail in their regular contributions they risk losing their town membership; in other words, they might be “no town men/women”, a state that is totally unconceivable for Oaxacans (Durand Ponte 2007). Moreover Cacaleños recognise that if they

¹⁵ By traditional faith I mean the way in which they choose to practice their faith. People in Santiago Cacaloxtotec, identified as traditional, tend to go to church and remain quiet and ceremonial. They also prefer organ played music and avoid participating in dances or frequent retreats.

¹⁶ This includes endogamous and exogamous marriages.

¹⁷ The *alcalde* (mayor) is a member of the municipal council and has the function of linking the issues of the state (government) with the church. The main functions are during the annual celebration (Saint Patron Festivity) and during the *cofradías* (Saints' Celebrations) in the case of Santiago Cacaloxtotec.

¹⁸ A *cofradía* is a group of people who look after Roman Catholic saint imagery or pottery figures. They care about the saint and celebrate his/her festivity.

cease to be Roman Catholics they lose the possibility of participating in their local government. Thus, migrants' monetary contributions have made the annual celebration of Saint *Santiago Apostol* bigger, longer and more sophisticated¹⁹.

Religion and its practices are produced at the local level in Quialana by the Roman Catholic Church in that community, which apart from organising the yearly festivity of Saint Bartholomew on August 24²⁰, has 'allowed' the introduction of different groups that provide the opportunity to discover and think about different ways of being Roman Catholic. *Apóstoles de la Palabra* (Apostles of the Word) was an initiative proposed by the Oaxacan archdiocese and tends to attract Roman Catholics who prefer to practice their faith in a traditional way. *Apóstoles de la Palabra* does not have a branch in the US as is totally organised by the Quialanenses living in the community. *Renovación Carismática* (Charismatic Renovation), part of the renewal movement within the Roman Catholic Church, is the most recent group to develop, being introduced to the town by a young government officer, José, with a university degree who believes that the movement has saved the town from alcoholism and witchcraft. José is the youngest of five other brothers and he is the only one in his family that has never migrated to the US.

¹⁹ Community citizenship is also exercised in San Bartolomé Quialana but in a different way. The inhabitants in San Bartolomé Quilana are not divided by *cofradías* and only have one main town celebration during August (Saint Bartolomew). In Quilana community citizenship is not so strongly related to the Roman Catholic Church, non-Roman Catholics can also exercise community citizenship, although in a limited way.

²⁰ Every year Quialana celebrates its annual festivity in honour of Saint Bartolomew. The festivity is sponsored by a *mayordomo* who pays for all the expenses generated by the celebration. To become a *mayordomo* one must be Roman Catholic and an honourable citizen of Quialana. The Roman Catholic Church, in agreement with the mayor, proposes different *mayordomo* candidates who might or might not be in the community physically. During the last ten years most of the *mayordomos* have been migrants living in the US and in 2010 for the very first time a woman was chosen as *mayordoma*.

“J: [...] I remember this community [Quialana] was a chaos. For instance, violence, alcoholism, family problems, people did what they wanted... what they wanted. There was no respect; the main problem was alcoholism but other things too. Around seventeen years ago, around that time some other movements [religious] started to arrive to the community such as Jóvenes Unidos por Cristo [Youths United by Christ] and they implemented good things. And around 2006 or 2007 I was the coordinator of the church [Roman Catholic Church] and I had the opportunity to bring the movement [Charismatic Renovation]”

E: How did you heard about them?

J: in Oaxaca City, in the Oaxacan archdiocese, from there but the movement [Charismatic Renovation] has been around for a long time. It is different from Jóvenes Unidos por Cristo [Youths United by Christ] because this one comes from the US and Renovación [Charismatic Renovation] from Oaxaca City.” (June 11, 2011. San Bartolomé Quialana).

Renovación has reshaped the idea of being Roman Catholic by introducing a stronger devotion to the Holy Spirit and introducing to the Mass happy and amicable songs accompanied by dancing and choreographies²¹. The group has become very popular among women who have found a more direct and active means of religious participation. For instance the group has a band formed exclusively for women which has even played outside the community.

Contrary to Cacaloxtotec, where there are only two traditional groups within the Roman Catholic Church that consist exclusively of women²², the greater religious diversity of Quialana has given the inhabitants options as regards their

²¹ During my field work in San Bartolomé Quialana I had the opportunity to attend several Charismatic events. There I observed the dynamics of the religious movement.

²² The groups in Santiago Cacaloxtotec do not 'produce' faith practices options within the Roman Catholic Church. “*Damas de la vela perpetua*” and “*Evangelizadoras*” only meet to pray and help with the activities and organisation of the local church.

choice of faith and religious practices. In fact, the greater religious diversity has also transformed - or legitimized - other social institutions (e.g. the family) and gender relations amongst those who physically remain and those who are away. Furthermore, having a different faith has not limited the ability of non-Roman Catholic Quialeños to participate in the political life of their community.

It is now not unusual to have different beliefs and/or tendencies within the same family. For instance, in my host family²³ the parents were Roman Catholic, the two daughters were strongly involved in the *Charismatic Group* and the three sons who were living in the US were Mormons. This new catalogue of religious options has influenced local and transnational gender relations by, in some cases, legitimizing existing gender constructions and, in other cases, rearranging them (see Córdova Quero 2010). Being part of the *charismatic* Roman Catholic group or the Evangelical Church requires a great commitment from members, who themselves – the religious groups but also their individual members - have challenged previous conceptions of what it means to be a 'good' man or woman (Brusco 1995 cited in Hüwelmeier 2010, p. 127)²⁴. Both groups condemn the consumption of alcohol and use of violence, factors that were previously part of the Quialeños' concept of masculinity. Maria a member of the *charismatic* Roman Catholic group states:

“You know? Previously I loved to go to the cinema [to Oaxaca City] with my friend Abel, we are just friends and we used to come back quite late. And of course the police officers saw us arriving late. I didn't care at that time, at the end Abel is only my friend and I was not doing wrong. But now that I have fall in love with Christ I know that what I

²³ During my field work in both communities, a family in each town allowed me to live with them and be, in a sense, part of the family.

²⁴ Elizabeth Brusco (1995) in her study of machismo and protestant Evangelism in Colombia found that 'conversion' challenges machismo. Converted men are re-integrated into the community, household and church life, adopting values that are at odds with those of the dominant culture.

was doing is not correct. I should not provoke even the slightest rumour in the community. I am a decent woman and decent woman do not come back late with men in their cars.” (June 22, 2011. San Bartolomé Quialana)

Gertrud Hüwelmeier (2010) in her study of Vietnamese women in Germany argues that Pentecostal churches provide a place where women find comfort in regards to their family problems and migration experiences, which can be translated into empowerment despite male dominance in leadership positions. The same situation can be observed in Quialana where the re-construction of a 'good Christian man' has been an opportunity for women who were, for a long time, the subjects of domestic violence at the hands of their male relatives. Although women have benefited from some of these shifts, gender divisions remain fairly stark. Contraceptive methods are restricted and, in the case of the Evangelical Church women are encouraged not to wear the local traditional dress²⁵ because “*this might be related with pagan traditions*” (Isabel. January 21, 2011). Youth and what it means to be a single man/woman has also been impacted by the new religious panorama. Single men/women are discouraged from attending public dances, losing one of the few opportunities they had to interact with their male/female counterparts. Transnational marriages are also put into question especially when the husband who lives in the US has left the Roman Catholic Church (while living abroad) and the family in Quialana remains or wants to remain Roman Catholic.

“We celebrate [my daughter] first communion, but now she does not want anything [to do with the Roman Catholic Church]. It has happened that my husband gets angry because my daughter has gone to the Catholic Church. He said that we should not go anymore. But [during the annual celebration] I go early there [to the Roman Catholic

²⁵ The traditional dress in San Bartolomé Quialana is exclusively worn by women. It consists of a cotton embroidered top that is used as underwear, a colourful top, and a piece of tweed-style fabric that is wrapped around the waist. Women cover their heads with a colourful scarf and braid their hair with colourful ribbons.

Church]. But I don't know my husband, he gets angry and he asks us to go there [to Evangelical church], he says: if you really really wanted to take them [to the Evangelical church] you could have done it and all these problems wouldn't have happened! But luckily, recently he hasn't told me anything anymore, because before he would always say: you see, you don't listen to me! If you would follow my orders! You should take them there [Evangelical Church]! But I reply to him, that they [children] are not little kids anymore, I cannot take them, I cannot hold their hands and take them.” (Teresa. June 09, 2011. San Bartolomé Quialana)

Arguments and disagreements over the phone regarding the attendance of a specific church or due to a request to stop partaking in the annual town celebrations (now considered pagan events by the non-Roman Catholics) are examples of the stress caused among families.

Conclusion

By comparing the experiences of two indigenous communities located in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, this article has shown how the kinds of communities that male and female migrants leave behind, the style of migration they choose and the community to which they arrive, among other issues, matter. By focusing specifically on the transformative quality of religion as part of the sets of ideas, practices, social capital and identities that compose what Levitt (2001) has coined “social remittances” this work argues that social remittances impact not only individuals and groups of people (e.g. family, community) who are left behind but also institutions (e.g. churches and local governments). The migratory experiences of Quialeños have brought a greater catalogue of faith practices from which to choose, and at the same time lead to the questioning and reorganisation of pre-established conceptions of masculinity and femininity at the local level. The picture is very different for Santiago Cacaloxtotec, which still zealously protects their traditional Roman Catholic religious roots. Future

research should pay attention to those Quialeños who have migrated to Canada, as well as the US. If this migration path continues and consolidates, some other faith practices may be introduced into the community.

Future work on religion, gender and migration should look at how strong links that prevail in indigenous communities between the state and the church are modified or rearranged and whether this might have an impact on the paths of future migrants and on those remaining in the community. Another topic for future research is indigenous identity and its relation to religious practices. For many years the Mexican government has constructed an indigenous identity around the cult of Roman Catholic saints, but with the new religious/practices options, might the indigenous identity be lost?

References

Bartolomé, M. A. (2008) 'Fronteras estatales y fronteras étnicas en América Latina. Notas sobre el espacio, la temporalidad y el pensamiento de la diferencia', in Velasco Ortiz, L. (ed.), *Migración, Fronteras e Identidades Étnicas Transnacionales*, Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porrúa, 35-77.

Cohen, J., Rios, B. and Byars, L. (2009) 'The value, costs, and meaning of transnational migration in rural Oaxaca, Mexico', *Migration Letters*, 6(1), 5-15.

Córdova Quero, H. (2010) 'Faithing Japan: Japanese Brazilian Migrants and the Roman Catholic Church', in Tibe Bonifacio, G. and Angeles, V. (eds.), *Gender, Religion, and Migration Pathways of Integration*, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 37-54.

Cornelius, W., Fitzgerald, D., Hernández-Díaz, J. and Borger, S. (eds.) (2009) *Migration from the Mexican Mixteca. A Transnational Community in Oaxaca and California*, Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner.

de la Cadena, M. and Starn, O. (2007) 'Introduction', in de la Cadena, M. and Starne, O., eds., *Indigenous Experience Today*, Oxford; New York: Berg, 1-30.

Durand Ponte, M. (2007) 'Prólogo', in Hernández-Díaz, J., eds., *Ciudadanías diferenciadas en un estado multicultural: los usos y costumbres en Oaxaca*, Mexico City: UABJO, IISUABJO, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 11-34.

Fox, J. and Rivera-Salgado, G. (2004) 'Building Civil Society among Indigenous Migrants' in Fox, J. and Rivera-Salgado, G. (eds.), *Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States*, La Jolla, Ca.: University of California, San Diego, Centre for US-Mexican Studies, 1-65.

Hernández-Díaz, J. (2007) 'Dilemas en la construcción de ciudadanías diferenciadas en un espacio multicultural: El caso de Oaxaca', in Hernández-Díaz, J. (eds.), *Ciudadanías diferenciadas en un estado multicultural: los usos y costumbres en Oaxaca*, Mexico City: UABJO, IISUABJO, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 35-86.

Cornelius, W., Fitzgerald, D., Hernández-Díaz, J. and Borger, S. (2011) 'La Migración en Oaxaca, una mirada a vuelo de pájaro', in Cornelius, W., Fitzgerald, D., Hernández-Díaz, J. and Borger, S. (eds.), *Migración desde la Mixteca una comunidad transnacional en Oaxaca y California*, Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porrúa, 13-37.

Vázquez García, V. (2011) 'Prefacio' in Vázquez García, V., (ed.), *Usos y Costumbres y Ciudadanía Femenina: Hablan las Presidentas Municipales de Oaxaca 1996-2010*, Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porrúa, 11-23.

Hüwelmeir, G. (2010) 'Female Believers on the Move: Vietnamese Pentecostal Networks in Germany', in Tibe Bonifacio, G. and Angeles, V. (eds.), *Gender, Religion, and Migration Pathways of Integration*, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 115-132.

INEGI (2010) *Censo de Población y Vivienda*, Mexico: INEGI.

Levitt, P. and Lamba-Nieves, D. (2011) 'Social Remittances Revisited', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 37(1), 1-22.

Levitt, P. (2007) *God Needs No Passport. Immigrants and the Changing Religious Landscape*, New York and London: The New Press.

Levitt, P. (2001), *The Transnational Villagers*, Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press.

López, F. and Runsten, D. (2004) 'Mixtec and Zapotecs Working in California: Rural and Urban Experiences', in Fox, J. and Rivera-Salgado, G. (eds.),

Indigenous Mexican Migrants in the United States, Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 294-278.

Martínez García, C. (2005) '¿Por qué crece el protestantismo entre indígenas?', *La Jornada*, 6 July, available: <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2005/07/06/index.php?section=opinion&article=018a1pol> [accessed 02 April 2012].

Monografía del Pueblo de San Bartolomé Quialana (2005) *Escuela Primaria Rural Matutina "México Nuevo"*, San Bartolomé Quialana, Oaxaca.

Oehmichen Bazán, C. (2005) *Identidad, Género y Relaciones Interétnicas. Mazahuas en la Ciudad de México*, Mexico City: UAM Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas.

París, M.D. (2008) 'Estratificación laboral, migración transnacional y etnicidad', in Velasco Ortiz, L. (ed.), *Migración, Fronteras e Identidades Étnicas Transnacionales*, Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porrua, 239-268.

Oxford, C. (2007) 'No Greater Law: Illegal Immigration and Faith-based Activism', in Tibe Bonifacio, G. and Angeles, V. (eds.), *Gender, Religion, and Migration Pathways of Integration*, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 275-290.

Prieur, A. (2008) *La casa de la Mema. Travestis, locas y machos*, Mexico City: UNAM Programa Universitario de Estudios de Género.

Ruiz-Navarro, P. (2010) 'New Guadalupanos: Mexican Immigrants, a Grassroots Organization and a Pilgrimage to New York', in Tibe Bonifacio, G. and Angeles, V. (eds.), *Gender, Religion, and Migration Pathways of Integration*, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 237-256.

Sandoval Forero, E. A. (2008) 'Conversión, conflicto y reconocimiento religioso en indígenas de México', *Ra Ximhai*, 4(3), 635-656.

Stephen, L. (2007) *Transborder Lives. Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tibe Bonifacio, G. and Angeles, V. (2010) 'Introduction', in Tibe Bonifacio, G. and Angeles, V. (eds.), *Gender, Religion, and Migration Pathways of Integration*, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 1-16.

Tweed, T. (2006) *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vázquez García, V. (2011) *Usos y Costumbres y Ciudadanía Femenina: Hablan las Presidentas Municipales de Oaxaca 1996-2010*, Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porrúa.

Velasco Ortiz, L. (2005) *Mixtec Transnational Identity*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Vertovec, S. (2004) 'Trends and developments in transnational migration', *ESRC Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Paper*, WP 04-03.

Weber, D. (2008) 'Un pasado no visto: perspectivas históricas sobre la migración binacional de pueblos indígenas ', in Velasco Ortiz, L. (ed.), *Migración, Fronteras e Identidades Étnicas Transnacionales*, Mexico City: Miguel Angel Porrúa, 119-140.

Yescas Angeles, C. (2008) *Indigenous Route: A Framework for Understanding Indigenous Migration*, Geneva: International Organization for Migration (IOM).