

**MAKING HOME:  
SPIRITUALITY THROUGH MIGRANTS' EYES**

Autumn DeLong

Honors Project in Religious Studies  
Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota  
27 February 2020

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>AUTHOR'S NOTE .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
I.I. Methods .....	17
I.II. Data Collection Techniques .....	18
I.III. Study Population.....	18
I.IV. Data Analysis.....	19
I.V. Ethics .....	20
<b>II. CHAPTER ONE: THE ROOT OF OUR DEVOTION .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>III. CHAPTER TWO: WEAVING OUR TAPESTRY .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>IV. POSTSCRIPT: BY GUESS AND BY GOD.....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>ANNEXES .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Annexes for Chapter One .....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Annexes for Chapter Two .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Notes on Terminology .....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Glossary of Spanish &amp; Quechua Terms .....</b>	<b>143</b>

## **SUMMARY**

This honors project is based upon ethnographic research conducted with Mexican Catholic migrant women living in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Q'ero indigenous migrants living in Cusco, Peru. I explore the role of these two communities' spiritual practices and traditions in defining and reinforcing their sense of identity, beginning a discussion of religion's role in alleviating the difficulties of migration and placing meaning in that experience. I aim to communicate these migrants' stories as they shared them with me originally, emphasizing the centrality of their spirituality and worldview in defining their sense of identity apart from that of greater society. I suggest that migrants have a particular need for a sense of belonging in the midst of cultural change, and I emphasize that their experience of spirituality relies more upon the fleshiness and earthiness of this world. In their rituals, these migrants draw upon an experience of the sacred manifest through performance, discipline, and practice, rather than belief, faith, or intellectualism.

Above all, this project centers around the stories we tell in our lives – not as scholars, but as human beings. It stems from an attempt to understand the existential challenges which define our lives, using the experience of migration as a site from which we might begin that journey. It is an opportunity to interrogate how our lives are marked not only by the difficulties we experience, but also by the ways we choose to respond to these challenges. As a religious individual myself, I have long wondered what allows us to remain hopeful in the midst of existential change and challenge. For me, this project has been a path through which I have begun to understand the way these existential changes define and re-define our livelihoods and our identities.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

I grew up in small-town Iowa, thirty minutes from the (even smaller) town of Postville. In 2008, this tiny town received national attention for what was, at the time, the largest immigration raid in American history. Over 400 people were detained in one day, as ICE agents separated children from their parents and husbands from their wives. Although I was only ten, this event made the injustices of immigration policy in the United States abundantly clear to me.

But the raid, and the hate it expressed in the world, was not unique in my childhood. My experience of the world was absolutely defined by stories like these: stories of school gun violence, unjust treatment of immigrants, and domestic and sexual violence against women, to name a few. For me, these events were simply the norm. They happened regularly enough that I became desensitized to them – they were the simple reality of the world. Only over time did my response shift to outrage, and then to frustration, and sadness. As I came into my senior year of high school, I finally became convinced that the only way forward would be to follow my curiosity, to continue to learn, and to ultimately express love and acceptance in the face of injustice.

In my college decision process, I specifically sought out those institutions which would help me respond to events like these. I chose Macalester College because it was known for its reputation as a progressive institution with a politically active student body dedicated to social justice and to combatting the existing inequalities in the world. At the time, I expected I would major in an area known for producing lawyers, nonprofit workers, and politicians. I was interested in Political Science and Sociology, and I hoped to become an immigration lawyer after graduating from Macalester. Throughout my undergraduate career, I have been surrounded by like-minded individuals who truly cared about affecting change in the world around them. But I struggled, in my first year, to feel comfortable in this new place. I sincerely wondered how I would ever fit into the fabric of a student community composed mostly of students from cities on the coasts, coming to what, by contrast, might be considered the “quaint” Midwest town of St. Paul. I felt that my tiny Iowa high school could not rival the experiences of many Mac students who had attended private schools or enrolled in International Baccalaureate programs.

The Postville Raid began a chain of events in my life which sparked an innate interest in migration. I have dedicated my time outside the classroom to interning in the non-profit sector with immigrant law offices and volunteering with English Learning programs in the Twin Cities. In my first year at Macalester, I began to fall in love with Religious Studies and storytelling, and I wondered how my academic interests might contribute to the passions I held from my childhood. After my sophomore year, I began to conduct ethnographic interviews and observations with two migrant communities – first with a group of Mexican migrant women living in Minneapolis, and second with an indigenous community in the mountains of Peru.

All these pursuits, even in their variety, remained tied to my hope to develop a broad and empathetic view of the world and those around me, as well as my own role in that global community. For me, studying human rights was both a complicated and meaningful endeavor. I became disconnected from the disciplines which often produce politicians and lawyers; and I began to conceive of human rights as a set of values, rather than legal codes. As my undergraduate career comes to an end and I consider the work to which I might contribute in the future, I believe it is this passion for and commitment to being in relationship with those whose rights have been taken away which will uniquely position my work in this field.

My sheltered experience in the Upper Midwest of the United States had not prepared me for the kinds of hardships my interviewees had experienced. The stories I encountered in Minnesota and in Peru mirrored each other so fully that I could not fully appreciate the significance of each one on its own. These stories, told together, illuminate some of the more hidden aspects of migration and the human beings who go through this process. In the course of four years, I have come to believe that it is the responsibility of those who meet migrants in their new homes – who claim to stand for the rights of all – to evaluate and fight to somehow reconcile the variety of backgrounds and values which exist on this earth. In our fear, we fail to support one another. We fail to listen to one another. And we fail to love one another to the best of our ability.

Thinking about leaving this home and this community does, quite frankly, scare me. I have found the most genuinely caring and accepting – the most genuinely loving – people I have ever found at Macalester. From the staff in the Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, to my fellow choir members, to the faculty members who spend their time investing in my learning and future, to the campus cafeteria workers who learn your name and always greet you with a smile, Macalester is a place full of warmth and joy. Leaving will, in some ways, break my heart. But the community and love I feel in this place will follow me. Looking into the future, I hope I might continue to be surrounded by individuals who value the relationships they have with other human beings. I hope my own love for learning might continue to be nourished both in academic spaces and outside them. But, regardless of whether these hopes come to fruition or not, I know that my commitment to meeting injustice with love will remain. Macalester, in all its quirks, has provided me the space to nourish that belief and that commitment – and for that, I am forever grateful.

In this essay, I am attempting to reach a range of audiences, including the academic community, the migrant community, and the human community more broadly. As the migration experience is often oversimplified, I hope to communicate the power and complexity of these migrants' lives and their experiences with this process. These stories mean the world to them. In whatever way you happened upon this project, I hope you find meaning in these stories – as a scholar, as a migrant, and as a human being.

## I. INTRODUCTION

I sat on the steps of Sagrado Corazón that sunny July day, as I had done multiple times in the last week, preparing for what I could fully expect to be yet another emotional conversation which would pull at my heartstrings. At the time, I did not know how these interviews would materialize as academic work – the Roetzel scholarship had not dictated any requirements to me – but I hoped the answer to that question might become clearer as the interviews continued. The entire experience was simply a thought experiment, and I would not realize its full meaning for quite some time. As a 20-year old undergraduate student, I felt I had yet to prove my understanding of or potential in the Religious Studies realm, and I hoped this project might make a difference in defining that future for me. But I would come to realize, as I explored these stories over the coming months, that this work truly fed my soul. And although it would also begin to inform my academic and career goals, it principally reinforced my own belief in the importance of community, faith, and home. Beginning to understand these themes and how they affect the lives of migrants, however, begins with Karina.

A tall, beautiful Mexican woman of 40 years old, Karina greeted me with a kind smile, seeming to laugh with her eyes before we even exchanged words. She was the kind of woman who lit up a room when she entered it, a fact I had noticed the very first time I met her, six weeks before. As the women had gathered around for the end-of-session potluck dinner, she had stood in the line cracking jokes for their benefit, laughing to herself before she got all the words out. She made a point of explaining to me some of the foods I wouldn't otherwise understand. And at the end of the night, when the women received their home-printed certificates congratulating them on their completion of the women's empowerment program, she practically danced across the room, strutting with pride. As I sat down to talk with her six weeks later, at the end of July, I knew she

would be open about her experiences, and I felt more heartened than nervous as I got off the bus. Unlike with some of the quieter women, I did not worry that we would share awkward silences during our talk. And although I was not wrong about this, I had not anticipated that all that confidence, all her outward expression of pure happiness, also hid the raw hurt and destruction which marked her move to Minnesota just three years earlier.

Karina left her home in Mexico in the spring of 2015. Born into a hardworking but impoverished family, her decision to migrate to the United States was accepted as normal, and it was widely viewed as her most likely chance for success. Her husband at the time, the father of her child, had decided to pursue a life in the States and asked her to do the same. Although he had no plan as to where he would go once in the U.S., how he would find steady work or support Karina and their daughter, Karina's husband spoke to her parents and convinced them this migration would be her best chance for survival and the prosperity of their child. So, Karina followed him, with their daughter, to the United States. Karina herself felt scared, unsure of the logistics of it all. She had no contacts in the U.S. – no means to earn a living or find a place to live. She had no understanding of the English language, a tangible deficit to her ability to adjust to life across the border. As she began to open up to me that day, I learned she had endured the migration process with twenty others, all of whom trekked together through Mexico and into the United States. She explained to me the difficulties of such a journey – the lack of food and water, a place to sleep, and any real sense of hope. Without any system of protection, they were all vulnerable to the threats of gangs and human traffickers. Karina, impacted by the lack of food and water and exposure to the elements, was visited by La Virgen de Guadalupe, who spoke to and reassured her during the most difficult parts of the trek.

Devastatingly, all the worries Karina described to me manifested themselves in her experience once in the United States. She and her husband struggled financially to support themselves and their daughter, and the societal marginalization and racism they experienced as Mexican migrants significantly impacted their ability to thrive. After living in California for a period of time, Karina's husband left her and her daughter to fend for themselves. Although he had become abusive during their time in the U.S., her husband's departure left a gaping hole in Karina's life, and she struggled to accept his absence. The new financial and emotional burden only increased her discomfort and feeling of alienation in the United States. Karina resented her husband for bringing her and her daughter to the States, as she had never wanted to make that move, and she was increasingly anxious as they failed to make rent. Eventually, Karina met a new man, one who treated her better, and they moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota. The move helped Karina get a fresh start in the States, but she remained pessimistic about the future and her ability to survive amidst the constant difficulties of this life. She had not been able to obtain legal status, she struggled with her inability to speak the language, and her daughter began to fall into the same unhealthy patterns that Karina had experienced in her childhood. She felt more and more helpless as time passed.

In 2017, Karina found herself at Sagrado Corazón Catholic Church in South Minneapolis. Father Kevin and all the other staff spoke Spanish and had cultivated a strong community dedicated to serving the Mexican migrant population in the city. Although other parishes in the Twin Cities did similar work, the parish at Sagrado Corazón had grown significantly in recent years, with over 2000 people attending mass each weekend. Karina began coming each and every Sunday, and her sense of hopelessness diminished as she found a Mexican Catholic community with which to celebrate mass. Although she still could not make sense of the struggles she had been given in



life, she was now surrounded by a community which had been dealt a similar hand and could empathize with the desperation she felt.

During our conversation on the steps of the church, Karina emphatically described how central her faith has been in her life experience. She emphasized the role it had played in her ability to persevere when she bore a child at the age of twenty. As her family and others in their community had not required her to attend weekly mass, Karina had sought out this ritual on her own, even before arriving in Minnesota. As Karina entered a new world in the U.S., she also found herself at home in the newness of Mexican-American Catholicism. Those in her community in Minneapolis found similar meaning in connecting with the divine through the Holy Eucharist each week and through their independent prayers each day. However, Karina still found herself searching for more – more understanding of her faith and the ways in which it might help her overcome the strife she felt.

In November of that year, Karina's hopes for more understanding crystallized into a real opportunity. Maricela, another woman in her parish, had noticed the struggles of many of the women around her and discussed the issue with Sister Margaret and Father Kevin, two of the leaders at the church. Together, they considered ways in which they might build a support system for these women, many of whom had been abused by their boyfriends or husbands and neglected by the Church. Sagrado Corazón piloted a women's empowerment group to be held on Thursday nights, with opportunities for dinner and childcare offered at the same time. Karina attended these evenings, and as she and the other women discussed their struggles in moving to the U.S., they began to see the commonalities in their experiences as migrant Mexican women. Many had been subject to abuse at the hands of the men in their lives and had been afforded little respect in

exchange for the responsibilities of earning an income and raising children. Together, however, they found strength and community in these shared experiences.

I spoke with just one more woman from Sagrado Corazón before leaving the U.S. for the fall of 2018 to live in Cusco, Peru. During my time there, I conducted similar interviews to those at Sagrado Corazón, this time with a group of indigenous migrants called the Q'eros. In the last fifteen years, members of this community have moved from the very high mountains of Peru, near the village of Paucartambo, into the city of Cusco. These migrants leave their homes largely for financial and educational reasons, as they struggle to make ends meet in their isolation from the rest of an increasingly globalized Peru. But Q'ero indigenous identity is powerfully connected to the community's history and ancestral land. As a result, many of my interview subjects described their offerings for Mother Earth as the tradition of their ancestors. In the city, the Q'eros have less opportunity to connect with the power and sanctity of nature – a connection which defines much of their livelihoods. The rituals practiced by the Q'ero community revolve around their belief in practicing reciprocity with the earth, specifically with the feminine Pachamama (translated as Mother Earth), and the masculine Apus, or centers of spiritual energy.

My interviews with the Q'ero community began with average door-knocking in Alto Cusco, on the outskirts of the city. One morning, my in-country advisor, an anthropologist named Mirtha Irco, suggested we visit the home of a woman named Victoria. Victoria would ultimately lead me to Doña María, a 91-year old Q'ero woman living across the ravine, who would become the most meaningful and significant breakthrough for my research. I visited Doña María on a Monday, accompanied by Mirtha. We walked the dirt paths of the neighborhood, high up the side of the mountain, avoiding the stray dogs which ran after us a bit too close for comfort, and the cracks in the dirt path which would put our ankles at risk. When we reached the metal door, we

knocked and waited as we heard the sound of barking from inside. When nobody responded, we rapped on the door once more for good measure. Suddenly, a woman pulled open the door to the house beside Doña María's and peered out – a woman on the young end of middle-aged, around 40 years old, dressed in her traditional Q'ero attire. Mirtha began to ask if Doña María had left for the morning, but as she did so the old woman appeared in the doorway. Well under five feet tall, I could barely see her. But, for some reason, I felt an immediate connection to her – one which I would struggle for months to define or describe.

The four of us entered Doña María's house, where we climbed the stairs into the upper level, an open-air space with a dirt floor. The younger woman offered us small stools to sit, while she and Doña María settled themselves on blankets. This woman, we would learn, was one of Doña María's grandchildren, who had followed Doña María to the city for better financial opportunities. In the Q'ero community, paqos, or spiritual leaders, have the ability to perform differing levels of rituals, connecting with various sources of spiritual energy. However, as these traditions become more and more difficult to preserve with the increasing urbanization and globalization of Peru, very few paqos have advanced their study of spiritual traditions past the ability to conduct rituals with the Pachamama. This most basic form of paqo is designated a pampamisayoq, the level which the rest of my interviewees had achieved. Doña María, however, was the last altomisayoq – the highest level of paqo – surviving in the entire Q'ero community, a group of 3,000 individuals. Although she had the ability to connect with the Pachamama and make traditional offerings like the pampamisayoq, Doña María's spiritual responsibilities involved more advanced work with the Apus. When she performed this work, she would sit with those asking for the ritual in a dark room in the countryside and call the Apus, which came in the form of birds.

While they flew around the house, Doña María walked with and spoke with them, asking for their guidance and assistance.

Doña María had moved to the city for the opportunity to conduct these rituals for tourists from around the world. Since moving to Cusco, various tourist and spiritual organizations have paid her to travel to other parts of Latin America, North America, Europe, and Africa to perform rituals for groups in those regions of the world. Her life had changed significantly since she made the difficult decision to migrate, as these opportunities had only arisen for her given her position as one of the only remaining *altomisayoq* in all of Peru accessible to cultural outsiders. The *Apus* exist around the world, and they are able to communicate with each other across the distance of many thousands of miles. Even with this responsibility and financial opportunity, however, Doña María's heart remains with the Q'ero community in the mountains, and she returns often to visit and perform rituals for them. The rituals have not lost their meaning – they remain integral to her home community and serve as an essential connection for Doña María to her indigenous identity.

As I hiked back down the mountain from Doña María's house that day, I found myself pondering how the indigenous rituals she practices in the city might differ from her practice with her fellow Q'eros in Paucartambo. Although the tangible actions the rituals involve have not changed form, it seemed possible that her newfound financial gain might cause a fundamental change in her motivation or the rituals' meaning. However, as I thought about Doña María's absolute commitment to the Q'ero community, I realized the intrinsic meaning of the rituals had not changed at all. Rather, they had become a means for survival in a quickly and dramatically changing environment. Her Q'ero beliefs and values were the central element of her identity, which continued to define itself against the backdrop of an urbanized, globalizing Peruvian society.

Deep in the back of my mind, this realization began to inform my understanding of the Mexican women's experience at Sagrado Corazón. The church preserves many aspects of Mexican life and culture, including traditional shrines for La Virgen de Guadalupe, many flowers and candles, and the Spanish language. In the midst of these practices, it also invites them into new teachings and commitments which it believes to be essential to *understanding* Catholicism. In the practiced choreography of their Catholicism, the women also find a new meaning and deeper understanding of their faith experience. In the United States, their Catholic identity not only stems from religious-political symbols, familial connections, or once-a-year mass attendance. Rather, they are now pursuing a difficult, but rewarding, journey in their Catholicism.

When I arrived at this conclusion – that the women had begun to experience a more intellectual and engaged Catholicism – I wondered (worried, even) if they also experienced a shift to more individualism, a common characteristic of a faith-based religious focus, especially in the West. But my time with them demonstrated that, although they do experience a different approach to Catholicism in the U.S., their rituals and the community they form has been ingrained in them their entire lives. These cultural values of family and community remain the focus of their Catholicism – they could not thrive in the same way without the community of women supporting and surrounding them. The church's empowerment program intentionally cultivates the women's relationships and allows them to share their stories with each other. Through their daily practice, the communities with which I have worked have ultimately found and maintained an essential tie to their community and to fostering the relationships they have formed with one another. It is through these connections that they find the resilience and empowerment to push forward in the difficulty and trauma of marginalization, racism, and abuse. It is through their communities that these individuals have become whole once again.

\*\*\*

The themes and experiences I explore in this project are not new or revolutionary in any surprising way. In fact, the themes of community, connection, and relationship are some of the most ancient values on this earth. But they do revitalize and reframe these themes within the context of the global migration phenomenon which our society faces today. In that way, I hope this project might in some way serve as a meaningful response to the discourses and systems that negatively affect and marginalize migrant and minority communities. Through this project, I tell the stories of two communities who gracefully welcomed me into their lives, describing my experiences and thought processes along the way. As the piece develops chronologically along with the story of my last two years of college, this work is both analytical and reflective – both academic and personal. As such, I want to welcome you to a period of growth in my own life and that of many I have come to love.

In *Chapter One: The Root of Our Devotion*, I offer an ethnographic account of the stories of migrant women living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. I conducted the interviews and observations upon which this chapter is based during the Summer of 2018, through the Roetzl Religious Studies Fellowship at Macalester College. In beginning this research, I aimed to explore the religious practices of migrants to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. I began by visiting and attending mass at various Spanish-speaking Catholic churches in the area. When I eventually connected with Father Kevin McDonough at Sagrado Corazón Catholic Church, my interest in female empowerment became more central to my research when he described the church's women's empowerment group to me. This chapter focuses particularly on the migrants' experience of Catholic rituals, dialogue, and community. In particular, I hope to highlight the

ways explicitly Mexican cultural practices and values, which are rooted in the indigenous traditions of the region, contributed to the migrants' sense of belonging and community.

*Chapter Two: Walking with the Apus* draws upon ethnographic research I conducted in November of the same year with Q'ero indigenous migrants living in Cusco, Peru. I came into contact with this community through the Peru: Indigenous Peoples and Globalization program through SIT Study Abroad. As with my research in Minnesota, this ethnography began as a broad interest in migrants' spiritual traditions and how spirituality affects the experience of something as difficult as migration. Through this chapter, I seek to describe the role of indigenous spiritual practices in building community among the migrants and in preserving their identity as Q'ero after their migration to the city. I must note that, although the migrants practice indigenous spiritual traditions with the Pachamama, they also identify as Catholic, and many also regularly attend Catholic mass. For these migrants, Catholicism and their traditional practices with Mother Earth coexist and have interwoven with one another through their family and personal histories. After the second chapter, I offer a Postscript which aims to bring these stories into conversation with each other and to contextualize the importance of the themes in much broader terms.

Through this project, I hope to foreground, first and foremost, the stories of the individuals who welcomed me into their lives. My goal in telling these migrants' stories parallel to each other is not to compare or contrast their adherence to doctrinal religious institutions, but rather to explore their religious and spiritual experiences as a response to the existential difficulties and crises of the migration process. The project as a whole explores the role of spirituality in shaping migration and in defining migrants' sense of identity. As such, I emphasize the particularity of ritual performance and meaning-making as the communities describe them. Thus, I am interested in religion not as a broad and overarching phenomenon, but as it exists in the particular locations,

spaces, and times which make up migrants' lives. I ask: how does ritual experience change or remain constant, and how does that new circumstance impact different communities' understandings of and abilities to respond to unforeseen circumstances?

This approach assumes that the field of Religious Studies “*must* include the absolutely mundane and seemingly unimportant ... [but] must also take note of the human inhabitants of that location/space/time who point to an elsewhere, another time, or even the end of time.”<sup>1</sup> In focusing on the particularity of these communities' experiences, we create a more personal and empathetic view of the *meaning* of ritual and religious practice for those discussed, rather than essentializing experiences and identities in the interest of creating theory. I am interested in how the practice of and continued belief in religious and spiritual traditions creates a space for heightened connection and community. In this way, I draw heavily upon the work of Robert Orsi, who asserts:

Intersubjectivity is not only a local or intimate matter: such relational ties structure religious practice and experience in a global context too. Immigrants and migrants establish connections between heaven and earth that stretch as well between one environment and another and among families, friends, teachers, and others around the world, in their new homes and in the ones they left. Networks of connections between heaven and earth map the globe.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than placing religion opposite the profane of the secular, as many of us in the West might choose to do, Orsi offers an understanding of religion which locates it within the everyday, embedded within the mundane. He posits that these migrants do, in fact, experience an all-encompassing presence in their lives that does not exist opposite absence.<sup>3</sup> In sharing the stories of those I interviewed, I hope to demonstrate not their capacity for religious experience *in spite of* secularism, but rather the real presence of the divine in their lives across time and space, in both

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*, edited by Kristin Norget, Valentine Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 268.

<sup>2</sup> Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 8.



comfort and hardship. I hope that retelling these stories will work against the statistic and demographic information which often characterizes our understanding of migration here in the United States and in the global North more broadly. These impersonal forms of communicating and exporting information ultimately allow the global North to continue with its dry and close-minded intellectual discourse.<sup>4</sup> Rather than adhere to the orthodox expectations of the academic institution, I aim to offer a view of religion as experienced by marginalized communities; a religious experience which exists as a given and as a constant for these individuals, especially as they persevere through trying and life-altering change.

Robert Orsi beautifully elaborates the complexity of individual humans' life stories:

The people who appear in these pages clearly think about their religion; to emphasize practice is not to deny reflection. They also make choices, although they do so in the more modest sense of choosing on the field of what is already given to them. (That I even have to write these things indicates how strong the normative public discourse of religion is in this culture.) But belief has always struck me as the wrong question, especially when it is offered as a diagnostic for determining the realness of the gods. The saints, gods, demons, ancestors, and so on are real in experience and practice, in relationships between heaven and earth, in the circumstances of people's lives and histories, and in the stories people tell about them. Realness imagined this way may seem too little for some and too much for others. But it has always seemed real enough to me.<sup>5</sup>

In the complexity of these women's stories, I hope we might prioritize their experience first. Rather than immediately questioning their *belief* in the presence of God and the Virgin Mary in their lives, I hope we might accept the stories they tell and choose instead to explore the meaning and effects of those presences in their lives. For the women of Sagrado Corazón, God and the Virgin Mary *are* present. I am not in the business of determining the "truth" of the theology or

---

<sup>4</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 18.

belief of any individual or community outside myself. I am in the business of exploring and analyzing the history, culture, and stories of these communities.

## I.I. Methods

I chose to conduct the first half of this research in the Twin Cities of Minnesota, a location which allowed me to observe masses at multiple Latin American migrant churches while also focusing most of my energy on working with the Sagrado Corazón de Jesús parish in South Minneapolis. At Sagrado Corazón, I observed a few of the empowerment group's meetings during the month of June 2018. During the month of July, I conducted individual interviews with some of the women, lasting between 30 and 120 minutes each.

I conducted the second half of this project's fieldwork with the Q'ero migrant community in the city of Cusco. The Q'ero migrants' physical marginalization and the lack of accessibility to monetary resources made the election of a specific location difficult, so I chose to conduct my research from my own home in Cusco, travelling daily to the various homes of my interviewees in the city. I travelled to the San Sebastian district the first day of fieldwork to ask my participants' consent to interview them and to schedule the various meeting times. From there, I spent various days over two weeks traveling and interviewing those members of the Q'ero nation in various neighborhoods in the city. During this time, I had the opportunity to observe a few small practices during the fieldwork period, including a coca reading, the communal roofing of a Q'ero home, and a calling of *Animu* through the blessing of a blanket.

### I.II. Data Collection Techniques

As religious experiences are often uniquely individual, I conducted this investigation through a qualitative lens. My interviews with the leaders of both the Sagrado Corazón empowerment group and the Q'ero migrant community helped build an understanding of the communities' origins.<sup>6</sup> For my own memory, I recorded the conversations and documented my thoughts and reflections on their content in my field journal. I conducted my interviews with the women of Sagrado Corazón in Spanish, rather than English, to ensure that they felt as comfortable as possible. In addition, I observed Spanish mass at seven other Latin American parishes in the Twin Cities to better understand my research at Sagrado Corazón in relationship with the rest of the local migrant population. Finally, I utilized my own analysis of other documents and academic articles to interpret the dialogue between my collected data and earlier findings. The notes I took both during fieldwork and the literature review periods have been integral in understanding the relationship between religious practices and migrants' sense of identity. My methods during the fieldwork period in Peru largely reflected those of my time in Minneapolis, except that I conducted only some of my interviews in Spanish, while I utilized an interpreter to assist with Quechua translation for those interviews with older members of the Q'ero population.

### I.III. Study Population

The first half of this research focused heavily on the experiences of the eight Mexican migrant women with whom I spoke individually. During the fieldwork period, I spoke with the five leaders, as well as three participants, of the women's empowerment group about their religious practices and the group's importance to their experience in the U.S. In total, I completed eight

---

<sup>6</sup> More details about the individual interviewees and the specific questions I asked them can be found in the annexes of this essay.

interviews during my fieldwork, in addition to numerous empowerment group and Sunday mass observations. As my own schedule limited my ability to continue research into the fall, I chose to focus my energy on the community at Sagrado Corazón, rather than seek out women of other parishes to interview.

In the second half of this research, I talked with four *pampamisayoq* and one *altomisayoq* (the last of the Q'ero nation) about their religious practices and the preservation (or lack of preservation) of the traditions in the city, after their migration. In total, I completed five interviews with specialists of the Andean traditions, in addition to an interview with a practitioner of the rituals. As time was a great limitation in this project, I did not have the chance to interview more general practitioners. However, this was not a large problem, as the religious specialists described their own experience of identity in the migration process while they also served as authority figures on the religious practices of the community. The participants of my investigation were adult women and men older than 18 who have migrated to the city of Cusco.

#### I.IV. Data Analysis

As stated above, I notated these interviews and observations and recorded each interview for my own reference. These notes, ideas, and reflections served as the principal mode of explaining and analyzing my interviewees' religious experiences. This data collection, in tandem with the previous scholarship recounted above, has driven my ability to analyze the migrants' religious practices and their role in the migration process. I believe that, with a qualitative study such as this, each individual's experience must be examined both on its own and in relation to the others'. During my analysis, I considered all the migrants' experiences and opinions separately and then began the process of drawing comparisons more broadly.

#### I.V. Ethics

Above all, I am primarily interested in protecting my study subjects' rights and wishes. The migrant women of Sagrado Corazón constitute part of a vulnerable population in the Twin Cities and in the U.S. as a whole, as the government often skirts their inalienable rights as human beings given their undocumented immigration status. I never questioned the women about their legal status, and I protect their identities in this report through the omission of last names and other personal identification information. I informed them of the details of my research and my goals prior to beginning the interviews and received verbal informed consent to record the interviews for my own use. Finally, the women had the right and ability to terminate their participation in this project at any point during the process, as well as to ask any questions they wished about my interest in their group and the purposes of my research. Although I believe this research to be meaningful and significant, I primarily hope to protect the women's rights throughout the process.

I took similar precautions in my fieldwork in Peru, as once again my investigation focused on a vulnerable population in the city of Cusco. To avoid any exploitation of my participants, they were informed of the details of this study before beginning with the interviews. Unlike with the women in Minneapolis, I received informed consent to use the participants' photos in this report, which are included in the annexes. In each case, this process occurred verbally, as many of my informants cannot read or write, and only spoke only Quechua comfortably. In the case that the interviewee could not speak or feel completely comfortable communicating in Spanish, my advisor, Mirtha Irco, translated my explanation of the project and the informed consent process into Quechua to help the participant understand the study completely. I took note of each one's verbal consent in my field journal.

\*\*\*

I believe exploring these themes – of migration, religion, community, and home – may prove to be meaningful for both the communities about whom I write and for the audience which may hear these stories. These themes are, of course, extremely broad – while the stories which contribute to my understanding of them are quite individualized. As such, each one must be accurately and fairly represented as only one part of a larger migrant and religious community. Thus, I am interested in lifting those themes from individual migrants' stories in an effort to better understand and potentially redefine the way we, as a society, define home. In his book, *The Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being*, Michael Jackson states:

Whether planned or accidental, desired or dreaded, the passage from one place to another, one life stage to another, or one state and status to another often figures centrally in the stories we tell about our lives and who we are. Though we may hanker after hard and fast differences between self and other, human and animal, man and machine, male and female, these boundaries get blurred, transgressed, and redrawn. We morph and migrate, in and out of our bodies, in reality and in our imaginations. Our moments of rest are soon enough disrupted, our settled states disturbed, our minds distracted.<sup>7</sup>

This quotation and the narrative which surrounds it in Jackson's book has deeply affected the way I view this topic of study and its relevance in today's world. Others often question how I spend so much of my time reading and writing about what seems like a narrow area of study. But silly as it may seem, I believe studying this topic, reaching conclusions but never answers, ever striving to understand its nuances across time and space, may provide a bit more insight into migrants' experiences and the values and practices which make those experiences not only survivable, but also meaningful.

I spent over an hour talking with Maricela, the woman who originally mentioned the need for female support in the parish to Sister Margaret. My last question of each interview was, "What

---

<sup>7</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 2.

is your favorite part of being Catholic?” as I thought it provided a chance to synthesize all the previous questions into one final statement. Maricela responded, “I love that it teaches us to serve one another, the neighbor, the stranger.” I immediately remembered a hymn sung in my church growing up, called Pan de Vida. The lyrics are as follows:

Pan de vida, cuerpo del Señor [*Bread of life, body of Christ*]  
Cup of blessing, blood of Christ the Lord  
At His table, the last shall be first  
Poder es Servir, porque Dios es amor. [*To be is to serve, because God is love.*]

Maricela and I sat on the steps outside the church singing this hymn together, and it suddenly became clear to me what these women find in their Catholicism. They not only attend mass and the women’s empowerment group to strengthen their own selves and faiths and relationships with God, but also to serve and support one another as they each traverse new and difficult experiences through their migration. Even as these migrants experience some of the most striking hardships one can imagine, they remain committed to bringing beauty into this world. If nothing else, illuminating that story is enough to make this study worthwhile.

## II. CHAPTER ONE: THE ROOT OF OUR DEVOTION

The Catholic Church has long been known by the moniker of the “universal” church, a label purported over hundreds of years in an effort to unify a diversity of cultural and ethnic differences across vast geographic space. This tagline, however, has allowed scholars and theologians alike to gloss over the variety of practices and beliefs which characterize individual Catholics’ religious experiences. In fact, Catholicism as it has existed nearly since the moment of its conception has been absolutely defined by the migration of its followers. Catholic communities and individuals have moved across space to new locations, bringing their cultural practices and values with them and adopting new ones along the way. Catholicism’s incorporation of this variety of experiences must be viewed as characteristic of its very being, rather than an exception to the rule in a monolithic and universally “pure” religion. Catholicism, in its universality, accommodates for the various realities of all those who practice it.

Kristin Norget, Valentina Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin – the editors of the anthology *The Anthropology of Catholicism* – call for a more nuanced scholarly view of Catholicism as a *lived* institution. They call for an approach which views Catholicism “not as an ‘official’ religion crisscrossed by ‘folk’ practices, but as a living ecology in the most holistic sense: that is, as an alignment of ‘living signs’ and the individual agents who populate them.”<sup>8</sup> Studying Catholicism – and arguably, any religion – must first explore the micro-level experiences of religious *individuals*, not systems. This approach ultimately provides us with a more nuanced understanding of macro-level Catholicism as an institution.<sup>9</sup> Norget, Napolitano, and Mayblin ask, “how could recent sociological understandings of institutions as ‘ingenious combinations of personalities and

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*, edited by Kristin Norget, Valentine Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 21.

<sup>9</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism*, 12.



materialities' help us understand how Catholicism (as individual experience, as religious organization, and as social institution) endures over time?"<sup>10</sup> The Catholic institution's long history has been centrally characterized by an acceptance of both a "singularly enduring material institution," centralized in the ritual of the Eucharist, and a vast diversity of devotional practice.<sup>11</sup> Scholars have long wondered how "the Church, as head of a vast global religious regime, assert[s] a transcendent universality while concurrently acknowledging difference."<sup>12</sup> Even for those who convert to other, often Protestant, affiliations, the *culture* of Catholicism remains embedded in their sense of identity, so that traditionally Catholic symbols and values continue to hold sway in their lives.<sup>13</sup>

The editors of *The Anthropology of Catholicism* suggest a conception of the institution's long history as a longitudinal axis, while the multiplicity of practices accepted within the institution form its latitudinal direction. Thus, Catholicism as "one" religion "is spatially and organizationally elastic in that it can stretch to contain a bewildering variety of devotional structures and theological positions without breaking."<sup>14</sup> In its universality and elasticity, "There are no opposites that Catholicism cannot encompass — democracy and authoritarianism; rationalism and irrationality; romanticism and science; masculinity and femininity. It is, Schmitt writes, a symbolic hermaphrodite."<sup>15</sup> Of course, this capacity to accommodate both singularity and multiplicity is not unique to Catholicism. Many faith institutions encompass vastly different demographics and value systems, which may depend on each other to exist or, conversely, may fundamentally oppose

---

<sup>10</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Kristin Norget, "Popes, Saints, Beato Bones and other Images at War: Religious Mediation and the Translocal Roman Catholic Church," *Equinox Publishing* 5, no. 3 (2009), 343.

<sup>13</sup> Norget, "Popes, Saints, Beato Bones," 346.

<sup>14</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Muehlebach, "Complexio Oppositorum: Notes on the Left in Neoliberal Italy," *Public Culture* 21, no. 3 (2009), 498.

one another. However, Catholicism does seem to have a unique capacity for ambiguity, which makes space for extreme cultural and life changes like migration.

Despite the diversity of the institution as a whole, many waves of Catholic migrants throughout history have experienced judgment and discrimination from the church officials who receive them in their new locations. Richard R. Treviño describes these experiences for southern Italians and Mexicans in the United States, identifying the migrants' reclamation of their identities through this judgment as especially representative of the Catholic migrant as a figure throughout this history. He explains:

What church personnel saw as spiritual deficiencies [the migrants] understood as a source of strength. For both peoples, their 'peculiar faith helped them build community and retain the identity, pride, and values that sustained them as they struggled to create a space for themselves in a society that saw them as outsiders or even outcasts.'<sup>16</sup>

In studying this tension between different ethnic groups, it becomes clear that a multiplicity of Catholicisms exist across the world, and even within the borders of a single city or within the walls of a single church. For nearly its entire history, the United States of America has served as a principal destination for immigrants around the world, whether they flee gang violence, domestic issues, or economic insecurity. While the 'push' factors which motivate individuals to pursue new lives away from their homes vary widely, the ideal of the "American dream," purported around the world, continues to create a particular allure, pulling migrants to the United States in droves. As a result, we can observe a multitude of Catholicisms in the United States, all of which manifest values and perform rituals which may differ or even directly contrast with each other.

The state of Minnesota, specifically the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, serve as the main hub for immigrant communities in the Midwest region of the country. The cities have

---

<sup>16</sup> Roberto R. Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 80.

received large amounts of immigrants since the Vietnam War era, when a influx of Hmong refugees, persecuted by newly imposed communist governments, arrived in Minnesota. Since then, the Twin Cities have received waves of migrants from Southeast Asia, Central and Latin America, and Eastern Africa, as well as groups from the Middle East and Eastern Europe.<sup>17</sup> In 2015, nearly half of these immigrants (49.2 percent) had become naturalized U.S. citizens.<sup>18</sup> The Twin Cities are now burgeoning with citizens from around the globe and stand as one of the most diverse locations in the Midwest.<sup>19</sup>

These immigrants experience an extreme transition during their migration to the United States, which in turn affects their life experience in this new location. In recent years and decades, the influx of migrants from Central and South America has been a site for profuse discussion and often hateful rhetoric toward migrant and refugee communities more broadly. With the election of POTUS 45, conservative Americans have become ever more vocal, characterizing migrants as lawbreakers who refuse to accept American “values” and ways of life. These individuals often cite migrants’ use of their mother tongue and difficulty to learn English as evidence for these claims, when it is their own discomfort which often causes these distorted beliefs. These individuals have a deep fear that American culture may change because of the influx of individuals from other countries. Political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists have previously analyzed these biases and the demographics which influence them, but even these overlook migrants’ own experience and focus instead on the effects of migration on the host culture.

---

<sup>17</sup> 13.9 percent (64,980) of immigrants originated from Mexico, 7.2 percent (32,904) from India, 5.7 percent (26,050) from Somalia, 5.5 percent (25,135) from Laos, and 4.6 percent (21,022) from Ethiopia. (Analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 American Community Survey 1-year PUMS data by the American Immigration Council.)

<sup>18</sup> American Immigration Council (Augmented IPUMS-ACS data, as published in “State-Level Unauthorized Population and Eligible-to-Naturalize Estimates,” Center for Migration Studies data tool).

<sup>19</sup> In 2015, approximately 457,000 immigrants (foreign-born individuals) comprised 8.3 percent of Minnesota’s population. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, by American Immigration Council.)

Central American migration northward to the United States and specifically to Minnesota is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating only to the early 2000s. Today, about 64,000 Mexican migrants live in Minnesota, the majority of whom still reside in the Twin Cities.<sup>20</sup> Although not all the migrants live in the same part of the cities, they have fostered relationships with each other, creating a sense of Mexican community within the greater society. An increasing number of Mexicans practice other Christian traditions (mainly Pentecostal or Evangelical ones), but Mexico's Catholic heritage remains strong in the background of many migrants' lives. In the United States, this Catholic heritage and tradition allows the migrants to build community through shared experience.<sup>21</sup> As much of the American population does *not* identify as Catholic, this religious identity clearly demarcates the migrants from the general American population. In effect, Catholic practice ultimately serves as a distinguishing identity marker, insulating the community from the surrounding society.

Often, the abrupt cultural shift of migration forces these communities to reevaluate their values, their commitments, and their experience of the world. In this essay, I view migrants' religious experience as a defining factor of the migration process. I am interested principally in migrants' micro-level religious experience during the journey itself and in their resettlement in their new location. I ask: how does religious practice survive in a new location, where the majority culture does not subscribe to the same principal teachings? How do Mexican migrants navigate such a shift in religious demographics and cultural norms? And finally, what role might Catholicism play in the lives of female migrants, who experience a sense of inferiority based on their sex both in Mexico and during the migration process? I aim to explore all these questions

---

<sup>20</sup> American Immigration Council.

<sup>21</sup> Jaqueline Hagan and Helen Rose Ebaugh, "Calling Upon the Sacred: Migrants' Use of Religion in the Migration Process," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2003), 1145-1162.

while also emphasizing and reinforcing the importance of the women's empowerment program at Sagrado Corazón for cultivating resilience and strength in these women. In the midst of significant change and hardship, the women I interviewed have preserved essential aspects of their religious practices, cultural values, and Mexican identity. In my own life, these migrants gave human faces to a difficult journey, the realities of which are often pushed aside by statistic information and hateful rhetoric in American news feeds and social circles. Their stories of attachment, loss, and separation also create stories of community and home – a strange dichotomy which, when considered more deeply, I believe all human beings might be able to understand.

When I began this work, I was principally interested in the experiences of Catholic migrants in the whole of the Twin Cities. Given my history volunteering with Spanish-speaking migrants at various ESL programs, along with my time working at the Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota, I chose to narrow the scope of that study to focus on the experiences of Spanish-speaking migrants in the area. In May 2018, I contacted and visited eight different Spanish-speaking Catholic churches, all working in some capacity with migrant populations from Central and South America. This portion of my research process was especially difficult, as my lack of previous experience in researching and contacting parishes and organizations barred my ability to make substantial or meaningful connections with them before or after my visits. My connection with Sagrado Corazón de Jesús Catholic Church originated through my undergraduate advisor, James Laine. I had reached out to Father Kevin McDonough, the priest at Sagrado Corazón, in late May. A close friend of Professor Laine, Father McDonough welcomed my questions and interest in the parish, and Sagrado Corazón quickly became the most feasible option for my research. When I told Father McDonough about my personal interest in women's experiences and the gender dynamic and discrepancy which exists between male and female migrants, Sagrado

Corazón crystallized as the perfect parish to work alongside, as it actively supported a women's empowerment program for its parishioners.

The church sits in the heart of South Minneapolis, a neighborhood of the Twin Cities which has, in recent years, become more and more ethnically diverse as migrants from all over the world settle there. The Spanish-speaking community is just one of many groups in the area, but its presence in the neighborhood is obvious. I first visited the church on May 27, 2018, for Sunday afternoon mass at 1:15. I rode the bus from my apartment in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood, first taking the A-Line express bus through the Highland neighborhood, almost to the Mississippi river which separates St. Paul from Minneapolis. When I got off that bus, I took the 23 over the river, through residential neighborhoods, and across I-35 into South Minneapolis. As the scenery changed, Spanish-language businesses became more frequent, and I realized I could see the steeple of Sagrado Corazón in the distance, above the trees which have grown from saplings since the church was first constructed.

The church itself is a seemingly unchanging landmark in a neighborhood which has experienced near constant transition in the 100+ years since its construction. At the time of its founding in 1907, Incarnation Church (which would adopt the title of "Sagrado Corazón" 100 years later, was nicknamed "Cathedral of the Cornfields," as it stood in the distance from the then-town of St. Paul. The parish grew quickly in its first 15 years, accommodating 1500 families in 1922. Since then, the community has experienced obvious change, not only in the landscape surrounding it, but also in the community within its walls. The parish now has a sizable Spanish-speaking community of 7000 people which come from about 2500 households. 70% of these come from Mexico and 20% from Ecuador, while the other 10% represent other Central and South American countries, especially Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Colombia. In the height

of July, the cavernous space becomes stuffy with the movement of hundreds of bodies, a lone industrial fan cools the corner of the sanctuary. Traditional Mexican Catholic shrines line the perimeter of the space, and the flowers adorning each one begin to shrivel within just a few short hours in the heat. But the parishioners don't seem to mind – they come for the service and stay for the community. When the mass lets out, mothers join together on the front steps to chat while their husbands pull up the family cars. The children run around outside, avoiding the inevitable moment when they will get pulled away from their friends to be taken home for the afternoon. And on the corner of one block in South Minneapolis, Spanish becomes the new normal for just a few short hours each Sunday.

Conceiving of Catholicism as a diverse ecological system and lived institution allows us to focus our attention onto the practices and beliefs of the individuals which construct the communities of which they are a part. For many Catholics, including those of *Sagrado Corazón*, religious practice and belief is integrally related to one's community. Thus, for the women of *Sagrado Corazón*, the importance of religious symbols like *La Virgen de Guadalupe* reaches beyond the boundaries of religion to represent various other aspects of identity as well. As Orsi asserts, *La Virgen* is absolutely integral to Mexico as a nation. She “does not ‘stand for’ or ‘represent’ Mexico. She is the living embodiment of Mexico.”<sup>22</sup> The Virgin Mary has gained renown and importance for a variety of Catholic communities around the world, often those which experience extreme discrimination or marginalization by colonial or imperial powers. Greeley and Cunningham both argue that portrayals of Mary which highlight her role as Jesus' mother, emphasizing her comforting and protective traits, also portray a particular notion of femininity. This femininity is “an aspect of God normally denied us by the patriarchal view of God that is part

---

<sup>22</sup> Robert A. Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2016), 55.

of the Western tradition.”<sup>23</sup> In that motherhood, Catholic women around the world find a point of entry into what is otherwise a profusely androcentric religious institution.

As a result of its difficult history, Mexico has become uniquely devoted to Mary in search of motherly protection. Incredibly, “Twelve million people a year visit the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico, where the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego in 1531.”<sup>24</sup> The individuals venerating Mary not only experience her presence in their visitation of such renowned sites – numerous lay Catholics also describe being visited by her in their everyday lives. Some Catholic theologians refer to Mary in a way which downplays her connection to the divine and her centrality in many narratives outside the New Testament Gospels. Scholars such as Michael P. Carroll, however, argue that “suggestions about making Mary a symbol or metaphor represent wishful thinking on the part of liberal theologians for whom traditional Marian devotion is a bit embarrassing.”<sup>25</sup> In the lives of Mexicans and others who practice Marian devotion, Mary is “far more general and far more all-encompassing” than simply a de-sexualized mother goddess.<sup>26</sup> Mary’s female identity, along with all the maternal and fleshly characteristics which accompany that womanhood, are central to the devotion to and veneration of her both in Mexico and elsewhere.<sup>27</sup> Mexican women find comfort and strength both in her closeness to Jesus and in her very humanity. Where Jesus is characterized as one and the same with God, both human and divine, Mary becomes an image which Mexican women can touch – one with which they can relate. Through her, they find meaning in their very womanhood.

---

<sup>23</sup> Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*, (Princeton: Princeton University, 1986), 223.

<sup>24</sup> Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 115.

<sup>25</sup> Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 224.

<sup>26</sup> Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 224.

<sup>27</sup> Orsi, *History and Presence*, 55.



The story of Mary as mother of God has had a particularly profound impact on creating a sense of solidarity among the migrant Mexican women I describe in this chapter. Timothy Matovina explains, “For many ethnic Mexican women, church activities afforded ‘the only arena in which they could legitimately, if indirectly, engage in developing themselves.’”<sup>28</sup> For the migrants worshiping at San Fernando in Texas, for example, Guadalupan devotion “reflected the conflicting sentiments of exile: hope and fear, patriotism and protest, trust in celestial protection and humble acquiescence to divine reprimand, longing for home and struggles over cultural expectations in a new land.”<sup>29</sup> As these migrants’ faith traditions and practices began to morph and include aspects of both Mexican and American cultures, the migrants themselves came to rely on their Catholic traditions to define their Mexican community against the American landscape. In its elasticity and ambiguous universality, Catholicism provided the space for an interweaving of tradition, while the rest of American life required more strict assimilation.<sup>30</sup> For the women of this project, some Catholic parishes in the U.S. represent the hatred and racism of the American right – while others provide a unique space for empowerment in their very Mexican-ness. In these spaces, the women are able to draw upon their particular identities to form community and a deeper sense of self. Catholicism – especially through devotion to Mary – pushes them toward emotional and spiritual transformation.

Before mass on that day in late May, I connected with Father McDonough to introduce myself in person and explain in more detail my hope to observe, interview, and eventually write about the experience to an academic audience at Macalester. He welcomed me into the Sagrado Corazón community and promptly introduced me to the parish during mass so they might

---

<sup>28</sup> Timothy Matovina, *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 114.

<sup>29</sup> Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio*, 97.

<sup>30</sup> Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio*, 5.

recognize me when I was around the rest of the summer. Standing in the sunshine on the steps outside, I became surrounded by a wave of women, who approached me to express their interest in participating in my project. Following that mass, Father McDonough told me to contact Sister Margaret McGuirk, a Dominican sister who assists with the Sagrado Corazón Spanish-speaking population. She responded with a warm welcome to the parish and an invitation to join in and observe the women's empowerment group, held on Thursday nights each week at the parish center. At the time, the group was in its second iteration and would be finishing up its meetings at the end of June. Sister Margaret encouraged me to visit a meeting before conducting individual interviews with each of the women, so they might see my face and get to know me before committing to participate in my project. I of course agreed to this proposition and decided to attend the group's meeting on June 21.

The empowerment group met in the parish center, in a historic house next to the church which had been refashioned to serve the church's growing needs. When I knocked on the door, three little boys opened it quickly, started, and then shyly looked up at me through wide eyes. Behind them, Sister Margaret called for me to come in and join the women in the dining room. Although obviously slightly confused about my interest in attending their group, the women welcomed me warmly and offered me tostadas, chicken, and vegetables as we gathered around the dinner table. They all introduced themselves, checking to make sure I could understand them as they spoke. After dinner, Sister Margaret began doing the dishes while the women gathered in the other room. As the meeting began, two of the women led discussion around the theme of abuse, highlighting especially that this trauma does not only exist only physically or sexually, but can also be experienced emotionally. Some women told stories about their relationships with romantic partners, while others described the various difficulties they encounter because of their femininity.

Above all, the space was a clearly female one – it was created by and for women, to discuss the specific needs and spiritual experiences of the Catholic women in this parish.

Each of these women has suffered and thrived in different contexts, under different pressures, and in relationship to different men. Some of them have experienced sexual and domestic abuse, while others have been happily married to their spouses for their entire adult lives. Some crossed into the United States without papers, undocumented and stopped at the border, while others arrived through the help of family members who arrived first and applied for family visas for them. Each of these women has found meaning in different aspects of the empowerment group. The derogatory rhetoric spouted in our current political climate regarding Mexican migration does these women’s stories a disservice and glosses the complexity and variation of their migration experiences. Below, I include a table of the women’s basic data to allow for a better understanding of the interviewees’ demographics – but their stories should serve as the centerpiece for understanding their lives.

	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>&amp; Time</b>	<b>Place of Origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Catholic Parents?</b>	<b>Attended Catholic School?</b>
<b>Martha</b>	06 JULY 2018	3:00 pm	Guadalajara, Mexico	48	yes	no
<b>Gloria</b>	06 JULY 2018	4:30 pm	Mexico	49	yes	no
<b>Maricela</b>	07 JULY 2018	5:30 pm	Morelos, Mexico	50	yes	no
<b>Cecilia</b>	08 JULY 2018	4:00 pm	Oaxaca, Mexico	42	yes	no
<b>María Isabel</b>	29 JULY 2018	1:00 pm	Morelos, Mexico	44	yes	no
<b>Karina</b>	29 JULY 2018	3:00 pm	Mexico	40	yes	no

<b>Julieta</b>	29 JULY 2018	7:00 pm	Mexico	40	yes	no
----------------	--------------	---------	--------	----	-----	----

After my initial meeting with the empowerment group, I began meeting with the women individually to discuss their personal experiences with the empowerment group and its impact on their lives. In my conversations with them, it became clear that each woman has experienced unique triumphs and obstacles throughout their lives. Some of the women migrated decades ago with their families, while others made the journey only very recently, pregnant and alone. For confidentiality reasons, I do not disclose the details of each woman's legal immigration status. Rather, I offer those details which provide insight into their personal experiences with the migration process and the role of the empowerment group. I must emphasize both the unity and the individuality of these women – none of them exist or experience the world entirely separately. Their experiences overlap, and the themes which emerge may give us insight regarding the larger demographic realities of Mexican migrant women.

The stories I recount here reflect larger trends observed among Latin American migrants to the U.S. overall. In crossing the U.S./Mexico border, in constantly changing environments, these women also operated within a larger system of gendered assumptions and expectations. As such, we must understand the geography, social location, and power structures which dictate migrant women's rights in the United States. Until the end of the twentieth century,<sup>31</sup> migration research focused almost exclusively on male, head-of-household, and guest-worker populations, overlooking the reality that women and children also found new homes in the United States. In disregarding the existence of women's migration, scholars under-appreciated the importance and nature of female migration and reinforced the social imaginary which had already gendered the

---

<sup>31</sup> The shift away from this research bias began in tandem with the emergence of second wave feminism.

migration process.<sup>32</sup> The American national imaginary, which defines citizenship through subject definitions of legality and illegality, began to conceive of migrants as lawbreakers and therefore negative influences on American society.

Pessar and Mahler attempt to combat this bias by examining how gender relations either facilitate or constrain both women's *and* men's migration and resettlement.<sup>33</sup> They argue that gender relations should be understood "as a latticework of institutionalized social relationships that ... organize and signify power at levels above the individual."<sup>34</sup> Women and men experience inherently disparate realities in the migration process, given the imbalance in their experiences of power. Ultimately, Pessar and Mahler remind the reader of the tension between the ideals of international human rights and the realities of cultural relativism and state sovereignty (concepts to which I return in the Postscript of this essay). Although all human beings may be empowered by the symbols of a globalized gender ideology, not everyone enjoys the same ability to migrate, let alone the same legal status or opportunity for advancement after that migration.<sup>35</sup> In particular, women may experience a more complicated adjustment period, as their migration ties them to multiple cultures and ideologies which conceive of gender and power in various ways. Previous scholarship focuses on various other aspects of this migration, but religion as an aspect of Latina migrants' identity still remains almost untouched.<sup>36</sup> For the women of Sagrado Corazón, religion functions as a form of empowerment – a narrative which broadens our understanding of migration

---

<sup>32</sup> Patricia R. Pessar and Sarah J. Mahler, "Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 814.

<sup>33</sup> Pessar and Mahler, "Transnational Migration," 814.

<sup>34</sup> Pessar and Mahler, "Transnational Migration," 813.

<sup>35</sup> Pessar and Mahler, "Transnational Migration," 820.

<sup>36</sup> Hagan and Ebaugh reference the need for more scholarship on the role of religion through the stages of migration in "Calling Upon the Sacred." This remains the only article I found which even remotely related to migrants' religious experience and still overlooks the relationship between religion and identity.

beyond the physical journey and into the relationships and communities which define female experience.

Caroline Walker Bynum and Carol Ochs argue that women's spirituality is particularly dependent upon these female relationships and support systems. In their words, we must focus "on something that is available to all people equally – their own experience."<sup>37</sup> By giving women the space to reflect on their experiences, they ultimately come "into relationship with reality."<sup>38</sup> For Ochs, women's spirituality is "based on the female model of development that gives priority to relationship and interconnectedness," reflected in the prominence of La Virgen de Guadalupe for the women of Sagrado Corazón.<sup>39</sup> For marginalized communities, and particularly for migrant Mexican women, focusing on relationship and interconnectedness often provides more spiritual depth than studying theology, for example. In one Catholic parish in Houston, "Confronted daily by inequality, women used their religiosity and domesticity as sources of empowerment. As keepers of religion and the home they stood at the very center of Mexican American family and community life, a position from which they exerted significant influence, directly and indirectly, and therefore commanded respect."<sup>40</sup> For these women, suffering does not prove God's falsehood or inexistence. Instead, they demonstrate God's "hiddenness." As Orsi states, "Absence and presence, in theory and theology, are twinned."<sup>41</sup> As presence requires absence, so does absence require presence. For these women, the invitation into spiritual community becomes undeniably powerful, as existence of the divine becomes even more certain. And the spiritual experience

---

<sup>37</sup> Kay Turner, *Beautiful Necessity: The art and meaning of women's altars*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 25.

<sup>38</sup> Turner, *Beautiful Necessity*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Turner, *Beautiful Necessity*, 25.

<sup>40</sup> Treviño, *The Church in the Barrio*, 57.

<sup>41</sup> Orsi, *History and Presence*, 6.

which accompanies this certainty adapts and changes, reflecting its surrounding society and culture in the process.

In the parish center, the women and I were relieved from the heat outside by a single fan in the corner of the room. The leaders of the group asked the women to break off into smaller groups to discuss the effects of abuse and their own experience with it. In my group, the women began by focusing on the challenge of being female in a historically and continually androcentric world. But they then pivoted and began to recount all the other aspects of their identities which constrain their opportunities for success in the United States. Here, they are not only female. They are also brown, middle-aged, Spanish-speaking migrants – identity markers which, admittedly or not, many employers view negatively. One of the women, quiet at first, began to describe her experience applying to work as a secretary in an office building. In response to her inquiry, the employer said plainly to her face that his white clients would likely be uncomfortable as a result of her presence, and that he could not risk that possibility for the good of his business. As her kind eyes watered and her voice wavered, the woman next to her gently touched her arm in solidarity. This kind of experience was not unique among the women. Another woman, maybe 55, said she had applied for a similar office assistant job and that the employer had denied her the position explicitly because her age would mean that she might struggle to learn the necessary tasks quickly enough. A third, the mother of two boys chasing each other through the building, snaking through the rooms with haste, had been denied a position because the boss blatantly did not want to spend time working with her broken English. As she told the story, she paused, craning her neck to tell the boys to slow down. As she turned back to us, she explained that *her* income, not that of her husband, is absolutely essential to keeping the boys in school.

Female migrants continue to experience marginalization and inequality in the United States, even as they have new opportunities for independence and advancement. Migrant women actually become more financially independent after their arrival in the United States. While only 41.7% of migrant women were “economically active” in Mexico, their activity rose to 57.8% in the United States (2004).<sup>42</sup> This percentage parallels almost exactly with the economic activity of *all* women in the U.S., which stood at 59% in 2004.<sup>43</sup> Thus, Mexican women remain as financially independent as do American citizen women. These statistics contradict the stereotypes purported by much of American society about migrants, which assume that these communities do not accept more “liberal”<sup>44</sup> ideas of women’s employment. Economists, who often focus solely on disparate wage opportunities in the two countries, miss aspects of the larger picture in migrant females’ employment.<sup>45</sup> Factors which contribute to female unemployment in Mexico, such as marriage, low education levels, and rural location, do not significantly impact employment prospects in the United States. While previously restrictive social norms no longer prohibit Latina women from participating in the workforce, but new difficulties emerge in the new landscape of the United States.

In that small group, the women around me unknowingly discussed intersectional identity, a theory of overwhelming popularity on many college campuses (like that of Macalester) today. The concept defines identity as an assortment of various factors, all of which may be privileged or marginalized. The combination of these elements, which society perceives in diverse ways, ultimately produces a sense of “mobile” identity, which allows individuals to negotiate their social

---

<sup>42</sup> Mary C. King, “Mexican Women and Work on Both Sides of the U.S.-Mexican Border,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 70, no. 3 (July 2011): 615.

<sup>43</sup> King, “Mexican Women and Work,” 615.

<sup>44</sup> I use the term “liberal” here to describe the collection of individualistic values which promote women’s empowerment and independence across political parties and affiliations.

<sup>45</sup> King, “Mexican Women and Work,” 621.



location by emphasizing or deemphasizing aspects of their character.<sup>46</sup> The women of Sagrado Corazón are not only defined by their status as women. Their age, their inability to speak English, their precarious legal status, their Latina-ness, and many other factors impede upon their ability to thrive in the United States. These identity markers carry new meaning when the women arrive in the U.S. – but their Catholic identity provides a sense of joy and comfort in the midst of that changing reality, and the women take pride in it.

This complex and multi-faceted experience of identity has been uniquely shaped by their experience of border-crossing. The women no longer identify completely with their home country of Mexico, given their physical separation from that land. However, they are still acutely aware of their difference and separation from much of U.S. society. They have brought aspects of their Mexican-ness with them across the border, and as a result they have been told by many in this country, both directly and indirectly, that those traits do not belong. In denying them access to basic income, employers keep migrants at arm's reach, never fully welcoming them into the country. Everyday citizens similarly avoid interacting with migrant populations, and the housing market keeps these populations separated from each other geographically. In an effort to integrate themselves and feel at home in the U.S., migrants like those of Sagrado Corazón begin to adopt and emphasize aspects of American social life when in public. In effect, they begin to hold transnational identities – personhoods which span both sides of the border, never fully committing to either side.<sup>47</sup>

This experience, however, requires constant negotiation and emotional labor. Vilma Santiago-Irizarry thoughtfully describes how migrants maintain and nurture their connections with

---

<sup>46</sup> Holly Wissler, "Q'eros, Perú: The regeneration of cosmological relations and specific identities through music," *Anthropologica* 28 (December 2010), 111.

<sup>47</sup> Matt Bakker, "Mexican migration, transnationalism, and the re-scaling of citizenship in North America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 1 (January 2011): 3.

both Mexico and the United States. She states, “transnational processes impact and diversify local articulations of identity among long established Mexican-American communities.”<sup>48</sup> The migration process allows for and embodies a state of hybridity, rather than neutrality.<sup>49</sup> Drawing from her own Puerto Rican family history, Santiago-Irizarry uses the Spanish word *maroma* (or tightrope walker) to describe the experience of Latin American migrants to the U.S. By walking the line between two worlds, the migrants risk everything.

As individuals from every corner of the earth now call the U.S. home, Santiago-Irizarry finds it particularly important to denounce claims that non-white, non-European, and non-Christian migration ‘tainted’ it. The United States never existed as a blank slate, unmarked or de-cultured, and the academic community should not treat it as such.<sup>50</sup> The first migrants to the U.S. indoctrinated it with specific beliefs, values, and traditions from their home countries. Now, the very being of this country has been defined by those cultural, religious, and demographic markers, which continue to reflect the origins of the first migrants to this land. Ultimately, Santiago-Irizarry criticizes the notion that migrants can and should adopt American values immediately upon their arrival in this new country. Challenging this idea of assimilation and acculturation, she references the ‘re-Mexicanization’ of migrant descendants – the children and grandchildren of migrants themselves, who revive and cling to their Mexican roots even if they have never known that country. The United States, in accepting the concept of assimilation, continues to thrive on the basis of its colonial history.<sup>51</sup> Scholars and everyday citizens alike might find new meaning in

---

<sup>48</sup> Vilma Santiago-Irizarry, “Transnationalism and Migration: Locating Sociocultural Practices among Mexican Immigrants in the United States,” *Reviews in Anthropology* 37 (2008): 20.

<sup>49</sup> Santiago-Irizarry, “Transnationalism and Migration,” 19.

<sup>50</sup> Santiago-Irizarry, “Transnationalism and Migration,” 22.

<sup>51</sup> Santiago-Irizarry cites the notion of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine, both of which promoted the idea of a specifically *American* and *Christian* right to seize land for the completion of God’s work. She argues this idea of American Christians as God’s chosen people continue to define American notions of assimilation.

deconstructing this history to better understand migrants' complex relationships with both their countries of origin and with the United States.<sup>52</sup>

Scholars like Emilio Parrado and Chenoa Flippen have been leaders in this effort, challenging “the expectation that migrant women easily incorporate the behavior patterns and culture values of the U.S.”<sup>53</sup> Even as migrant women adopt some aspects of American culture, they also preserve those traditions which they find most meaningful.<sup>54</sup> The authors describe this experience as “selective assimilation” and suggest that this experience of tightrope walking also means that, although women may experience an increased employment opportunities after their migration, they may also experience *decreased* independence in other ways. Given the relative ease of finding employment in the U.S. compared with Mexico, the impact of employment on women's power is significantly weaker in the United States than it would be in Mexico.<sup>55</sup> Women's precarious legal status, structural position within U.S. society, unfavorable work conditions, and lack of social support all undermine their well-being and power relative to men.<sup>56</sup> Fundamentally, the authors argue that the relationship between migration, work, and female independence is not unidirectional, and that exploring the particularities of individual women's

---

<sup>52</sup> Espousing a different position than Santiago-Irizarry, Bakker argues that the contested Matrícula Consular Identification Card threatens the legitimacy of the nation-state by allowing migrants to incorporate into U.S. society as part-time or guest-worker members and challenging traditional notions of citizenship. As guest workers, these migrants hold a sort of dual citizenship through which they maintain ties with both societies and cultures. Roger Sanjek briefly echoes this thought as he asserts that migration patterns result from a variety of factors, including expansion, the search for refuge, colonization, enforced transportation, trade diaspora, and emigration.<sup>52</sup> Contemporary nations therefore exist as conglomerations of peoples, rather than monocultural entities. Sanjek ultimately argues that the transnational experience does not limit itself to individual lives, but instead extends to the livelihoods of entire nations as well. A comprehensive understanding of transnational livelihood and identity involves a recognition of the difficulties experienced both by individuals and entire nations as they grapple with various social, cultural, and legal ties.

Roger Sanjek, “Rethinking migration, ancient to future,” *Global Networks* 3 (2003): 315.

<sup>53</sup> Emilio A. Parrado and Chenoa A. Flippen, “Migration and Gender among Mexican Women,” *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 4 (August 2005): 606.

<sup>54</sup> Parrado and Flippen, “Migration and Gender,” 606.

<sup>55</sup> Parrado and Flippen, “Migration and Gender,” 626.

<sup>56</sup> Parrado and Flippen, “Migration and Gender,” 628.

lives may shed more light on the realities of that experience. Previous scholarship focuses on various other aspects of this migration, but religion as an aspect of Latina migrants' identity still remains almost untouched.<sup>57</sup>

\*\*\*

On the day of my first interview, I nervously boarded the 23 to cross the river and into Minneapolis. As the bus turned the corner into the neighborhoods of South Minneapolis, the streets became narrower, and I, alone in the back of the bus, began to feel more at ease. I talked that day with a woman I had not met previously. I arrived almost 45 minutes early, anxious about relying on the bus system to get me there on time. When I entered the sanctuary, I blessed myself with holy water out of habit, walked halfway up the center aisle, and sat down in one of the pews. I found a chair off to the side of the room, then unpacked my computer, notebook, and pen. I checked my phone for the time: 2:25pm. Martha would arrive in 35 minutes. I sat there, wondering how to pass the time, studying the ceiling of the cavernous space closely. I took a couple photos of the altar, marveling at its intricacy. I doodled in my notebook.

When Martha arrived, I breathed a sigh of relief – finally, I could begin the “real” work of this project. As she sat down, though, I got nervous. What if my Spanish wasn't good enough? What if I wouldn't be able to understand her? But as Martha and I began our conversation, my worries left my mind. She, too, worried about her language skills. She, too, worried about how others would perceive her. This was something about which we could relate. As I asked her about her life in Mexico, her family and her Catholicism there, she explained to me that Catholicism in Mexico is all around. You simply can't forget about it. Many of the other women reiterated this

---

<sup>57</sup> Hagan and Ebaugh reference the need for more scholarship on the role of religion through the stages of migration in “Calling Upon the Sacred.” This remains the only article I found which even remotely related to migrants' religious experience and still overlooks the relationship between religion and identity.

same sentiment. They all come from Catholic parents and families in Mexico and have *lived* the pertinent Catholic heritage of the country and its culture. None of them attended Catholic school in Mexico. They were surrounded by pervasive, popular Catholicism, but they did not necessarily have the opportunity to interact intellectually with doctrine.

As I continued my interviews over the next several days, this same theme emerged repeatedly in the women's descriptions. Although some emphasized their own devotion to and belief in God in Mexico, the Catholic institution had occupied less of their time and energy. It was simply a part of the daily atmosphere. Deeper interaction with the tradition revolved around family celebrations of religious holidays and festivals. Karina described:

*“En México es bien diferente. Los papás... o por lo menos los míos, no era que siempre estaban diciendo ‘tienes que ir a misa, tienes que cada semana...’ no. Yo lo hacía porque yo tenía mi fe. la tengo. Entonces, ellos sí decían, “tenemos un bautismo, o primera comunión, o la confirmación. O ‘tenemos que ir a misa para semana santa’ o ‘porque es el día de navidad.’ Pero no era como que ellos estaban enfocados en que nosotros estábamos asistiendo siempre” (Karina).*

“In Mexico it's very different. Parents... or mine at least, were not always saying ‘you have to go to mass, you have to go each week...’ no. I did it because I had my faith. I have it. So, they would say, “we have a baptism, or first communion, or confirmation.’ Or ‘we have to go to mass for Holy Week’ or ‘because it's Christmas.’ But it wasn't as if they were focused on whether we were always attending [mass]” (Karina).

This experience largely reflects Mexican Catholicism more broadly, as described previously. Although many practitioners do not attend mass each and every week, or know every word of the prayers, Catholic teachings and values have become those of Mexican society more broadly. Cultural elements (i.e. the prevalence of adoration, shrines, candles, flowers, etc.) remain a central element of Mexican religiosity. Although increasingly diverse, Mexican Catholicism may be characterized principally by radical, evangelical, or “popular” practices, derived from indigenous spiritual practices and beliefs before the time of colonization and now expressed through

ecclesiastical base communities (CEBs).<sup>58</sup> As Orsi suggested previously, the particularities and objectives of these radical movements actually define Catholicism in its very being. As such, they cannot and should not be examined in isolation from the global Catholic community.

The particular stories the women describe, of the poverty and inequality they experienced in their childhood and young adulthood in Mexico, reflect many of the ideals of liberation theology, born in Latin America in the late twentieth century. This theology, based in many ways upon the social inequalities observed by Marx and his followers, advocates for tangible, faith-based action against poverty and injustice.<sup>59</sup> Although the popularity of this tradition grew in response to the many Latin American dictatorships of the time, “the social justice sought within the base communities is as much a product of a long, if varied, radical, Christian tradition as it is of the particular circumstances of political and economic marginalization in contemporary Mexican cities.”<sup>60</sup> During its advent, this theology received considerable criticism from the Catholic institution, centralized in Rome, which believed that it would challenge the idea of the ‘universal’ Catholic Church. In protest, the movement’s proponents continued to advocate for its central principles of justice, morality, and ethics; and they promoted a preferential option for the poor above all else. Over time, religious symbols like La Virgen also became political ones, urging

---

<sup>58</sup> Elsa Guzmán and Christopher Martin, “Back to Basics Mexican Style: Radical Catholicism and Survival on the Margins,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 16, no. 3, (1997): 351.

It is important to note that some of the CEBs aimed to develop a deeper intellectual understanding of Catholicism among the Mexican working-class communities. The women I interviewed at Sagrado Corazón, however, were not exposed to this religious approach until they arrived at the church in Minneapolis and began to attend the empowerment group’s meetings.

<sup>59</sup> Guzmán and Martin, “Back to Basics,” 352.

It should be noted that some liberation theologians disparage these popular religious practices, characterizing them as an “opiate of the masses,” and espouse a more conscious political theology. As the movement occurred in two separate waves during Marx’s time, some leaders purported slightly more conservative ideologies than others. Importantly, these waves occurred in tandem with the overthrow of multiple political dictators in Latin America and were an entry point for liberal political actors to interact with poor, working class citizens.

<sup>60</sup> Guzmán and Martin, “Back to Basics,” 351.

the Mexican population to rally behind the poor in the fight for economic justice.<sup>61</sup> For the women of Sagrado Corazón, this connection of the religious to the political also connects Catholicism to Mexico. Catholicism, for these women and for many Mexicans, is a mood. It doesn't demand intellectual interaction with theology or with the institution. Rather, it instills adherence to a particular political commitment to and social justice.

\*\*\*

The difficulties of the migration process do not end with the simple arrival in the United States. It has become clear in the last few years – especially with the separation of parents from their children and the deaths of migrants without explanation – that the United States does not unilaterally spell safety for these individuals. Although some of the women from Sagrado Corazón had arrived in the United States with a visa already in hand, many of them had trekked the long *camino* without enough food and water to sustain themselves and without any guarantee of stability in the U.S. Once they had arrived, the women struggled to discern who they could trust. They had no financial security, and they were unfamiliar with the English language. Some of the women met family members already in the U.S., in California or New York, and then moved elsewhere (eventually to Minnesota) to find work. Multiple women felt desperate without work and a steady income to support their children, which only exacerbated their difficulties to speak the local language and manage to survive while attempting to obtain legal status.

Most of the women never expected or planned to migrate to the United States and only chose to do so for their family members or out of desperation. Maricela and Karina explain:

*“Mi idea nunca era venir a este país. Nunca pronunciaba ‘quiero ir a los estados unidos.’ En México yo trabajé, pero mi esposo no tenía un trabajo. Entonces él se fue a California, y de allí se fue para acá, para Minnesota para reunirnos con mi papá, quien es ciudadano. Yo nunca tenía la idea para venir porque yo siempre era bien miedosa. Estaba pensando*

---

<sup>61</sup> Cesar Chavez, for example, used Our Lady of Guadalupe as a symbol of empowerment in his work for farm laborers' rights in the 1960s.

*‘yo no puedo. yo no me voy allí.’ Gracias a dios, mi esposo me sacó y me dio una visa, entonces no necesitaba venir caminando. Realmente, nunca me imaginé que me fuera para acá.”*

“The idea was never to come to this country. I never proclaimed, ‘I want to go to the United States.’ In Mexico I worked, but my husband didn’t have a job. So he went to California, and from there to here, to Minnesota, to meet my father, who is a U.S. citizen. I never had the idea to come here because I was always very frightened. I thought, ‘I can’t. I can’t go there.’ Thank God, my husband got me a visa, and I didn’t have to trek across the border. Really, I never imagined that I would come here” (Maricela).

*“Sabes que fue algo muy interesante porque yo no tenía planes para venir acá. Entonces, yo me vine para acá porque mi ex-pareja quería venir acá ... Pero yo tenía miedo. Tengo una hija, y pensé, ‘qué voy a hacer con mi hija?’ Antes que todo, pensé, ‘Cómo es de irte? Yo no hablo el idioma.’ Pero mis papás me dijeron que sí, podía venir. Me vine, y fue algo horrible. Pasé muy rápido, pero éramos como veinte personas. Dormíamos en una huerta de limones. Pasamos hambre. Llovió. Teníamos frío. No teníamos comida. Allí estamos al esperar hasta que los otros llegaron.”*

“You know, it was really interesting because I never had plans to come here. So I came because my ex-husband wanted to come ... but I was scared. I have a daughter, and I thought, ‘What am I going to do with my daughter?’ And more than anything, I thought, ‘How does it work? I don’t speak the language.’ But my parents told me yes, I could come. So I did, and it was horrible. It went by quickly, but there were about twenty of us. We slept in a lemon farm. We got hungry. It rained. We were cold. We didn’t have food. And there we waited for the other people” (Karina).

Although Karina had never imagined coming to the United States, she did so for her husband. Once in Minnesota, she searched for a sense of community to ease the transition. This story largely reflects the experiences of the other women in the empowerment group. Most found it difficult to connect with the Twin Cities community more broadly, and they struggled to find a hub for making connections among the Mexican migrant one. Cecilia described attending a different Spanish-speaking church in Minneapolis prior to coming to Sagrado Corazón. Although that parish highlighted the importance of the Spanish mass and was filled with Central American migrants like herself, Cecilia found herself lost and without any direct support through the church. As a single mother, she felt especially uncomfortable and alone. She eventually met Sister Margaret, who encouraged her to attend Sagrado Corazón, and their friendship steadied Cecilia. Sagrado



Corazón gave the women a unique sense of home – it focused on pastoral care above all else, emphasizing the value and worth of the women’s Mexican identity and culture. When other parishes failed to meet the women where they were, Sagrado Corazón extended a helping hand.

This narrative, described by so many of the women I interviewed, is not uncommon among the Latina migrant community more broadly. Many of these women struggle with depression as a result of the alienation and anxieties they have experienced throughout their migration process, in addition to the domestic and sexual violence and marginalization they experience as women. This sense of marginalization is uniquely detrimental for Latina migrants in particular. One in ten Latina migrants attempted suicide in 2018, and two in ten had created a suicide plan during their time in the United States.<sup>62</sup> These numbers are more than their male migrant counterparts, and they skyrocket above those of U.S. citizen men and women alike. Hearing the women of Sagrado Corazón recount their own experiences with gender inequality and marginalization, the gravity of these shocking statistics became even more apparent. For many, coming to the United States challenged their entire conception of reality and had pushed them to the very edge of their ability to persevere. Many had expected their difficulties to disperse once they reached the supposed promised land of the United States. Once here, however, they struggled to find resources to help them adjust to the realities of their new location. The desperation they had felt in their past relationships only grew.

\*\*\*

After our small group conversations, the leaders for the day had brought easels out from the closet, placed large pads of paper on them, and written out four different types of abuse: physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and neglect. The room was silent for a minute. And then

---

<sup>62</sup> Edith Bracho-Sanchez, “High suicide rate among young Latinas may be exacerbated by anti-immigrant rhetoric, experts say,” ABC News, January 15, 2019.

there were murmurs, as the women reacted to the terms. It was clear that, for some in the room, these categories were old hat – for others, however, they were brand new. Realizing that neglect might be included in that category of abuse seemed to shock them. From my interviews with the women in the weeks to come, it became clear that their particular experience of womanhood has changed shape with the addition of American gender roles and expectations on top of the Mexican ones they had inherited. Initially, the women avoided placing value on one over the other. Eventually, however, they named Mexican culture as “*más conservativo*” (more conservative) and critiqued the violence and oppression which sometimes results from that expectation. They explained that *machismo*<sup>63</sup> had permeated their teenage years, marriages, and motherhoods in Mexico. Many of them were expected to forfeit their education to help their mothers at home, while their brothers continued going to school. Multiple had experienced domestic or sexual abuse at the hands of their previous boyfriends and/or husbands. All the women discussed these actions as demeaning and just plain wrong. These stories of abuse and inequality echo those of current discourses surrounding sexual violence and gender inequality. Although the abuse they experienced may have originated in physical or sexual contexts, their harmful emotional and psychological effects extend across time and space and follow the women in all their experiences both within and outside of those abusive relationships. Healing is an ongoing process that will continue to define the women’s experiences of the world, of friendships, and of romantic relationships for years to come.

Mexican society’s acceptance of *machismo* created a toxic atmosphere which these women could not escape. Once they found Sagrado Corazón, however, many of the women they began to

---

<sup>63</sup> Merriam-Webster defines *machismo* as “a strong sense of masculine pride; an exaggerated masculinity.” The women interviewed described their experience as strife with this ideology, but I do not make an argument here regarding the culture of gender in Mexico.

feel more at ease with the reality of their migration and their new lives in the United States. The women's empowerment program had developed a unique and formative way of assisting the women as they transitioned to the U.S. The Sagrado Corazón parish leaders renounced this treatment of women and spoke in support of healthy, loving marriages instead. In August 2019, as I came to a close with my research and began the process of compiling these stories, I discussed the women's group with Sister Margaret. She shared her experience working with the group as particularly rewarding and inspiring, even after decades of work in the Catholic church. She emphasized the Catholic church's teaching – and therefore Sagrado Corazón's as well – surrounding women's rights in situations of domestic abuse. She stated:

The amazing thing about the leadership of our group is that two of the women are in happy marriages and two of the women are separated permanently from their partner and father of their children. The ones separated are raising their children as single parents. They each bring their unique experience to the group and there is no feeling of division or judgement in their sharing. Yes, we would definitely help a woman leave her marriage or relationship if it was abusive.

The good news is that the U.S. bishops have written a beautiful pastoral letter on domestic violence. It is called: "When I Call for Help." You can google it. It comes right up. In the first paragraph they write: We need to "state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified, and it is a sin and often a crime." And then in the last paragraph they conclude: "We emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage." Those are words of liberation for many women and some men. "No one is expected to stay in an abusive marriage." That's the position of the Catholic Church and many people don't know it.<sup>64</sup>

The empowerment group itself originated in November 2017, after Maricela spoke with Sister Margaret and expressed the need for further support of the female population at the church. That winter, Maricela approached four other women, all of whom worked with a Mexican-based Catholic organization (La Asociación Mexicana para la Superación Integral de la Familia, or

---

<sup>64</sup> Quotes received through email correspondence, 24 August 2019.

AMSIF)<sup>65</sup> to begin the process of teaching lessons on women's rights and female empowerment. In all its lessons and trainings, the organization draws upon Catholic teachings of equality and centralizes the image of God as a companion for those in distress. On its website, AMSIF states that the organization promotes personal development, reinforces women's self-esteem, and encourages a supportive culture among participants so they might transform their reality before eventually sharing that growth and newfound knowledge with members of their family and their community.<sup>66</sup> The women's empowerment group at Sagrado Corazón largely follows this same model, through the direction of the five leaders and peer support through the group's discussions, personal storytelling, and community bonding. Julieta and Gloria explain the group's goals, as well as the process they took to continue the work:

*“Decidimos crear el grupo para que las mujeres no se sientan solas, que se sientan que dios siempre está con nosotros, independientemente de lo que pase alrededor en sus vidas. Queremos que se sientan más liberadas, más queridas por alguien.” (Julieta).*

“We decided to create the group so the women won't feel alone, so they feel God's presence, no matter what happens in their lives. We want them to feel more liberated, loved by somebody” (Julieta).

*“Al principio, pensé que era algo temporada, nada más. Pero después hermana margarita le interesó mucho la experiencia de las mujeres y decidió explorar un programa de empoderamiento de mujeres que fue más formal. entonces asistimos doce clases con AMSIF para ser bien enseñado, y al fin yo dije, ‘wow, ahora entiendo mucho más que antes.’ y padre kevin nos decía que este grupo era muy necesario porque hay muchas mujeres que han sido afectados por la violencia sexual o la depresión.”*

“At the beginning, I thought that it was temporary, nothing more. But afterward, Sister Margaret was very interested in the women's experiences and decided to explore a more formal women's empowerment program. So we [the leaders] attended twelve classes with AMSIF to be well prepared, and at the end I said, ‘Wow, I understand much more than before.’ Father Kevin told us that this group was essential because many of the women have been affected by sexual violence or depression” (Gloria).

---

<sup>65</sup> La Asociación Mexicana para la Superación Integral de la Familia (or the “Mexican Association for the Comprehensive Improvement of the Family”) has been in existence for over 40 years. It works principally in Mexican women's education and formation. For more information on the organization, visit: <https://amsif.org.mx>

<sup>66</sup> “Bienvenidos a AMSIF,” AMSIF Coordinación Nacional A.C., accessed February 14, 2020. <https://amsif.org.mx>.

These preparations ultimately resulted in the thriving and flourishing empowerment group which I observed that June, now almost two years ago. The program has expanded rapidly since its beginning, and over 25 members joined in the first six months alone.

All of the women describe the group's lessons and discussions as powerful and important for their lives, but the particular meaning of this space, and the community formed within it, differs for each of them. Some are still in long-term, loving and stable marriages with their husbands, while others have left their partners and now raise their children alone. Gloria, still married to her husband, views the impact of the group as most important for her ability to educate her children:

*“Venimos de más mayores y pienso que el ambiente de los estados unidos tendrá más influencia en el pensamiento de nuestros hijos. Mi hijo dice comentarios como, ‘Los hombres no lloran,’ o ‘Si lloras, eres niña, qué te pasa?’ o ‘El color rosa es sólo para las niñas, no para los niños...’ Entonces, tenemos todavía esas ideas bien arraigadas, y a veces nosotros sin querer las repetimos. Pero le digo a mi hijo, ‘Los dos somos seres humanos y los dos tenemos vida humana.’ Entonces yo trato de enseñarles a mis hijos que esos pensamientos son negativos para la educación de los niños. Algunos siguen manteniendo la idea que ‘el hombre es mayor, superior a la mujer y tiene el control, el dominio,’ pero no, digo a mi hijo, ‘Si quieres llorar, llora. Porque tienes sentimientos. Llorar no es malo.’ Y eso es en contrario de lo que oigo de muchos otros, pero mi hijo no repetirá lo mismo de sus antepasados.” (Gloria).*

“We came [to the U.S.] when we were older, so I think that the environment of the United States will have more influence on our children's thinking. My son makes comments like, ‘Men don't cry,’ or ‘if you cry, you're a girl, what's wrong with you?’ or ‘the color pink is only for girls, not for boys...’ So, we still have those deep-rooted ideas, and at times we repeat them without thinking. But I say to my son, ‘Both [boys and girls] are human beings and both have human life.’ So I try to teach my children that those thoughts are detrimental to our children's education. Some maintain the idea that ‘The man is bigger, superior to the woman and has the control and the authority.’ But no, I say to my son, ‘If you want to cry, cry. Because you have feelings. Crying isn't a bad thing.’ And that is contrary to what I hear from many others. But my son will not repeat the same as his ancestors” (Gloria).

Through her learning with the group, Gloria now has more tools to combat the negative effects of *machismo* on her children's education and thinking. Her commitment to contest this mentality illustrates the empowerment group's work in the women's everyday lives and its intergenerational reach beyond the women themselves.

For Cecilia, the empowerment group has been an opportunity to grow in her expectations of a just, fruitful relationship. When she came to the U.S., Cecilia had traveled with her now ex-husband. She had three children with that man, and after years of domestically abusing her, he abandoned Cecilia, leaving her with the children and without a job. Alone in the U.S., Cecilia eventually met Sister Margaret and came to Sagrado Corazón. Although she had suffered years of mistreatment in an unhealthy relationship, she became one of the leaders of the women's empowerment group with the encouragement and support of Sister Margaret. She began to heal, slowly but surely, as she talked with the other women about the importance of healthy relationships and the values that define them. Now, she prioritizes support, communication, and respect.

Similarly, Karina has separated from her husband since arriving in the United States. She describes him as emotionally and physically abusive after their arrival, attributing that treatment to his inability to find stable work and, therefore, to support his family. Given her dependence upon her husband in her decision to come to the U.S. in the first place, Karina found herself especially lost after he left her alone with their daughter, who is now seventeen. Karina explained that her belief in God's presence in her life was central to her ability to accept the reality of becoming a single mother. As the empowerment group has reinforced God's love for the women and has reinforced their rights, Karina has found resilience in the face of adversity – this time in community with others, rather than alone with La Virgen during the *camino*. Through this female support system, she has not had to face the challenges of her experience alone. Instead, she has had the solidarity of other women in similar situations, who have now become her second and chosen family.

Other women described the group as particularly valuable in guiding them toward a new sense of self-worth. Many of them have been personally affected by destructive rhetoric which

objectifies women's bodies and tears down their self-confidence, both in Mexico and in the U.S. *Machismo* not only permeates women's ability to express their own opinions and support themselves financially, but also affects their opinions of their worth as human beings. Of all the women, Martha particularly focused on the weight of this negative self-talk and the difficult journey of combating the depression she experienced as a result. Through the empowerment group, Martha has begun the difficult work of reversing that narrative in her own head:

*“Si fuéramos perfectos, no estuviéramos aquí. Estamos acá porque necesitamos practicar. No somos feas, somos bonitas. Para dios somos bellas. Necesitamos aceptarnos como somos. Él nos ayuda. Yo sé que a veces tengo la idea ‘yo soy gordita.’ Pero es que si yo me ama, está bien, verdad? [se ríe]... También tenemos cuerpos sagrados, no?” (Martha).*  
 “If we were perfect, we wouldn't be here. We're here because we need to practice. We're not ugly, we're beautiful. To God we're beautiful. We need to accept ourselves as we are. And He helps us. I know that at times I have the idea 'I'm too fat.' But if I love myself, then it's all okay, right? [laughs] ... We also have sacred bodies, no?” (Martha).

Even as the women continue to struggle with depression and anxiety, and with the psychological effects of domestic or sexual violence, they now have the tools and the community they need to unpack those difficult realities. In the interviews, it became clear that these women feel a commitment to honesty and trust with Father Kevin and Sister Margaret, and they experience a sense of belonging in the empowerment group. Gloria and Julieta share:

*“Estamos unidos en nuestra fe” (Gloria).*  
 “We're united in our faith” (Gloria).

*“De una forma o otra, puedo compartir con las chicas. Estamos llegando a decir, ‘wow, como es la grandeza de Dios... Tenemos algo especial” (Julieta).*  
 “In one form or another, I can share with the other women. We are beginning to say, ‘wow, this is the greatness of God... we have something special” (Julieta).

The empowerment group purposely encourages the creation of female community, and the Spanish language which resonates joyfully through the parish center creates a sense of home and allows the women to preserve their community.

Even those women who had not experienced extreme situations of domestic or sexual violence expressed a profound sense of personal growth through their participation in the group.

Gloria explains:

*“Creo que ayuda a mi misma. Aunque no he experimentado la violencia, como muchas de las mujeres han sido golpeadas, yo también he encontrado apoyo por el programa y las otras mujeres. Mi historia es mínima a lo que ellas han vivido y que viven todos los días. Con ellas siento mas apoyada y nosotros sentimos escuchadas como mujeres” (Gloria).*

“I believe that [the program] helps me as well. Although I haven’t experienced the violence like many of the other women who have been beaten [by their partners], I have also found support from the program and the other women. My story is only a fraction of what the others have lived and live every day. With them I feel more supported, and we all feel heard as women” (Gloria).

Even the women who feel confident and healthy in their relationships, who feel they have a grasp on their sense of self, feel the effects of a societal attitude which marginalizes the female voice and subverts it beneath male power. In curating this program, AMSIF has identified and problematized society’s implicit rejection of female power and worth. Through the program, the women are, often for the first time in their lives, feeling heard in their experience as women. All these anecdotes – small, everyday manifestations of the lessons taught in the women’s group – join together to create a space for genuine solidarity in that room, on Thursday evenings. Together, these statements fulfill Maricela’s initial hope that the space might empower women to stand up for their rights and their equality, especially in relationship with the men in their lives.

\*\*\*

In attending and observing these sessions, I began to understand the group’s discussions not only as a teaching opportunity, but also as a space for the participants to grow as women, as wives, as mothers, and ultimately as Catholics. Many of the women described American Catholicism as inherently different from that of Mexico, citing the lack of flowers, candles, and shrines in American churches. The inclusion of these cultural elements – and the lack thereof in



many American churches – are quiet invitations for the women at Sagrado Corazón. And yet, even as entering the church feels like walking into a small piece of Mexico, the women have experienced heightened interaction with theology and doctrine since arriving in Minneapolis. Gloria explains:

*“Creo que aquí mejoré mucho. Conocí a la teología, añadida a la práctica. He venido a aprender por qué es necesario e importante vivirla. Allá lo hacía por tradición o costumbre, pero no encontraba la esencia bien o el fondo de por qué es importante” (Gloria).*

“I believe that I’ve improved a lot here. I’ve learned some theology and added to my practice. I have come to learn why it is necessary and important to live it [your faith]. I used to practice because of tradition or habit, but never found the essence or the basis of why it’s important” (Gloria).

The church not only emphasizes God’s presence in its parishioners’ lives. It also encourages them to study and understand their faith more deeply. The women express a shift in their own faith experience through this deepened understanding, the effects of which are obvious in their descriptions. For them, Catholic identity no longer stems only from religious-political symbols, familial connections, or once-a-year mass attendance. Rather, these women now pursue a constant and difficult, but rewarding, journey in their Catholicism and in their personal relationship with God.

When I arrived at this conclusion, I immediately wondered if they also experienced a shift to more individualism, a common characteristic of faith-based religious traditions. But it seems that their religious commitments, and the empowerment program in particular, have created a sense of community which thrives above all else for the women. Although they are more intellectually engaged in the U.S., the women’s Catholic practices remain tied to the Mexican culture they have always known. Sagrado Corazón preserves many aspects of their Mexican Catholic experience, including traditional shrines for Our Lady of Guadalupe, many flowers and candles, and the Spanish language. When parishioners enter the church, they enter once again into the Catholic “mood” experience they once had in Mexico. The rituals they cultivated before their migration,

now engrained in the women after years of practice, have become a natural comfort for the women in difficult times. Now, these rituals, preserved by the church and practiced by the women, reinforce the centrality of the Catholic faith and the Mexican community for the women. Nearly all the parishioners attend mass with their families, packing the church full for many of the weekend masses. As a result, being Catholic remains inextricably tied to being Mexican.

In its determination to preserve the Spanish mass and aspects of Mexican Catholicism, Sagrado Corazón has also helped the women understand and participate in the mass. Given the prevalence of English-speaking masses in the Twin Cities, and white American Catholicism overall, this “mood”-based, Mexican Catholicism is unique in the United States. It centralizes the importance of ritual and self-cultivation,<sup>67</sup> while also instilling the value of personal prayer and belief. This particular Mexican Catholic culture extends beyond the church walls, into discussion of women’s rights in the empowerment group. The program intentionally cultivates women’s relationships with each other and allows them to share their stories in a comforting, familiar environment. Surrounded by women with similar identities and backgrounds, they are able to tell the stories that others in the U.S. might never fully understand. These meetings – an opportunity for learning and fellowship – help them feel more confident and *heard* in their experience. Many of the women view this sense of solidarity and community as the point of entry for God’s presence in their lives:

*“A veces, necesitas estar bien, yo lo digo como, sin decir malas palabras, sin pensar malas pensamientos, tienes que respetarlos todos para poder servirle. En una de mis canciones favoritas, dice ‘no hay nadie como tú.’ Eso es verdad y lo decimos en el grupo de empoderamiento también. Dios nos escucha y nos ama cada una” (Karina).*

“Sometimes, you need to be alright, and without saying bad words, without thinking bad thoughts, you have to respect everyone to be able to serve Him [God]. In one

---

<sup>67</sup> This is terminology adopted from the work of Saba Mahmood. For further exploration on her understanding of the concept of self-cultivation and its relationship to agency, I highly recommend her article: Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

of my favorite songs, it says, ‘there isn’t anybody like you.’ That’s true, and we say the same in the empowerment group as well. God hears and loves each one of us” (Karina).

*“Él está conmigo y contigo, todos los días” (Cecilia).*  
 “He is with me and with you, every day” (Cecilia).

*“Puedo sentir el espíritu santo cerca de mi. Es en tu voluntad para conectarte consigo” (Karina).*  
 “I can feel the Holy Spirit close to me. It is in your will to connect with it” (Karina).

*“Siento que él es mi fuerza y yo sé que Dios me está dando fuerza cada día. Caminaré en la presencia del Señor, de Dios, de amor” (María Isabel).*  
 “I feel that He is my strength and I know that He is giving me strength each day. I will walk in the presence of Jesus Christ, of God, of love” (María Isabel).

*“Para estar en comunidad con otras personas... es mi fe, es dios. Es dios en nuestra vida. Estamos formando la fe, para hacer para otras personas que encontremos lo bien... No, nada más somos nosotros. Somos más... Yo me voy a servir a dios. No me preocupan otras personas que me han hecho malas cosas. Y es bonita compartir nuestras experiencias con las otras mujeres. Todos somos humanos, juzgados por Dios” (Maricela).*  
 “To be in community with other people... that’s my faith, that’s God. That’s God in our lives. We’re forming our faith, to do the right thing for those we encounter... No, we’re no longer ourselves. We’re more... I’m going to serve God. Other people who have done me harm don’t worry me anymore. And it’s beautiful to share our experiences with the other women. We are all humans, judged by God” (Maricela).

The church and the women’s group have instilled principles of community and determination in these women and have given them a new sense of strength in the midst of hardship. But beyond that, the love that exists between them, and the connections they make with each other, become the manifestation of the divine. The women’s certainty of God’s presence in their lives reinforces the accomplishments of the empowerment program. The group not only effects positive change in the women’s own sense of worth as women – it also brings them into deeper relationship with the divine and strengthens their spirituality.

\*\*\*

Religious Studies scholars have for some time noted the fraught relationship between colonialism and the term “religion.” As such, some scholars (revisionists, we might call them) have advocated for dissociating it from descriptions of non-Western, non-Christian rituals and beliefs.<sup>68</sup> For instance, Brent Nongbri asserts that this term has anachronistic and re-descriptive effects when used to describe the spiritual practices of the ancient Mediterranean.<sup>69</sup> Scholars like Nongbri often view this term as problematic particularly when it assumes that “religion” – with its particular white, Protestant background – exists universally across all human experience. For these scholars, the specific history of this word, and especially its relationship with colonialism, delegitimizes its usage to describe non-Western and ancient spiritualities.<sup>70</sup>

Within these arguments, however, I have found E. Valentine Daniel’s distinction between “mind” religion and “mood” religion useful in conceptualizing the religious practices described by my interviewees.<sup>71</sup> Daniel identifies a distinct difference of experience between intellectual, engaged religious experiences (those of the mind) and those spiritual practices which characterize everyday life (those of mood), which I have referenced previously. Daniel uses this distinction to argue that religion did not exist in non-Western and non-Christian regions, and that to name traditional practices as such would be anachronistic.<sup>72</sup> Following this line of thinking, a woman

---

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, the work of Talal Asad, E. Valentine Daniel, Daniel Dubuisson, Timothy Fitzgerald, Tomoko Masuzawa, and Brent Nongbri.

<sup>69</sup> Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University, 2013), 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 4.

<sup>71</sup> E.V. Daniel, “The arrogation of being,” *Macalester International* 8 (2000): 171-191.

E.V. Daniel, *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

E.V. Daniel, *Charred Lullabies*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>72</sup> Other authors have also begun to critique this style of categorizing religions and spiritual practices. Scholars such as Kelly Baker warn against the dangers of defining religion simply as a belief system, which reduces the religious experience of individuals and communities to what might otherwise be considered folklore or mythology.<sup>72</sup> She argues that such a definition, so tied to belief as a fundamental criterion, stems from and prioritizes a Protestant Christian tradition of defining religion as “sola scriptura” (only scripture) and “sola fide” (only faith). Kelly Baker, “What’s belief got to do with it?,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*, 28 September 2012. <https://bulletin.equinoxpub.com/2012/09/whats-belief-got-to-do-with-it/>.

praying at a shrine to an indigenous deity in Mexico does not practice a form of religion at all. From my viewpoint, however, this woman is clearly connected to a transcendental faith experience rooted in her own belief in the shrine's importance and linked back through the generations before her which also worshipped the same deity. The women of Sagrado Corazón embody these more "popular" and "folk" traditions from the beginning of their migration experience to the end. For example, they describe the importance of their devotion to La Virgen before, during, and after their migration. And yet, they also describe the contrasting American culture which does not embody or accommodate for the aspects of Mexican tradition which they hold dear.

I find James Laine's reinterpretation of the mind / mood distinction to be more useful and applicable to the research I present here.<sup>73</sup> Laine contends:

In my view, the cleavage that Daniel exposes is not so much a cleavage between the religion of Christianity (taken as a whole) and Asian (especially South Asian) traditions that he argues are not "religions", as it is a cleavage between styles of religious life that have yet to be classified ... The categories of mind and mood do, however, prove useful in articulating some of the differences between different religious practices among a wide variety of pre-modern and contemporary folk, and help us appreciate why for one group, matters of mind may be the very heart of "religion" (to be distinguished from popular culture, unexamined tradition and superstition), while for another group, matters of mood (Daniel's "heritage as ontic certainty") are a primary locus of things held sacred.<sup>74</sup>

Laine redefines these categories to characterize them both as religions – rather than taking validity away from the spiritual experiences of non-Protestant Christians, affording these communities the label of "religion" might actually be a powerful redistribution of power. Laine's interpretation of the mind / mood distinction provides a more compelling version of this divide, especially as it accommodates for the continuation of religious practices across transitions of space and time. As the world around migrants shifts, religious practices and beliefs fluctuate between the mind and mood categories, rather than remain static.

---

<sup>73</sup> James W. Laine, "Mind and Mood in the Study of Religion," *Religion* 40 (2010): 239-249.

<sup>74</sup> Laine, "Mind and Mood," 239-240.

For the women of Sagrado Corazón, Mexican tradition and culture have been the root of the women's devotion to the Catholic faith. And yet, even as these practices, values, and beliefs have been particularly meaningful for them, the empowerment and heightened intellectual understanding of Catholicism has provided them with a new sense of pride. For them, Catholicism has become *both* a tradition of mood *and* mind. Importantly, this change has brought about a deeper sense of the world as they imagine and hope it to be. By participating in the weekly mass, the recitation of prayer, and the meetings of the empowerment group, the women I interviewed have begun to view this life as inextricably intertwined with – nearly unintelligible from – the sacred and the divine. These methods of marking the women's lives reflect the power of ritual, through which “The world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality.”<sup>75</sup> The practice of Catholicism, the performance of ritual, and the development of mindful religious practice all allow the women to make sense of their lives in the midst of a radically new and different cultural environment.

Sagrado Corazón provides a space for the women to maintain their connection to Mexico and to their community by preserving the rituals which have defined their Catholic identity their whole lives. They now regularly attend mass, hold discussion groups, share their beliefs and faith experiences with others, and focus on learning about their value as women and as humans – none of which defined Catholic practice or identity in Mexico. They openly discuss the awakening of their faith and relationship with God after their arrival at Sagrado Corazón. Much of this seems like a fundamental change of belief or practice. And we may aptly define it as such. The women have clearly experienced a shift in their belief and focus on their Catholic faith. However, unlike

---

<sup>75</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 112.

the vast majority of their migration-related lifestyle changes, their religious experience in the U.S. draws upon an aspect of their identities which is integrally tied to Mexico. Catholicism connects them with their past and with their culture, rather than imposing new beliefs, customs, and values to erase the old. In their meetings, these women breathe life into what once felt like a deadening reality, after horrific situations of abuse and violence. By creating and reinforcing a sense of community around these values, the women reinforce their individuality and self-confidence. Each woman supports the others, and they in turn support her as well. Thus, the group cultivates a reciprocal cycle of engagement, support, and empathy for the betterment of the group and for each woman on her own.

While scholars like Daniel and Nongbri purport “popular” Catholicism to be syncretic or culturally specific, the entire experience of the women of Sagrado Corazón contradicts this characterization. As Laine asserts, when religions are practiced away from their original location, that distance often demands a heightened *mindful* interaction with the religion.<sup>76</sup> In Mexico, the women in this research clearly experienced a community-based, “mood” Catholicism, with which they rarely interacted or analyzed beyond the basics. Upon their arrival to the United States, however, they began to experience a discussion-based, “mind” Catholicism which relies on cultivating deeper contemplation and understanding. As the women spoke at length about awakening their individual relationships with their faith, it became clear they have become more skilled in understanding Catholic teachings and, as a result, are more convinced of their own sense of self-worth. Their Catholic experience does not fit neatly into the “mind” and “mood” categories. Rather, it is defined by a shift *from* a mood experience *into* a mind experience. This does not necessarily force a disjuncture between religion and culture, but rather demonstrates the essential

---

<sup>76</sup> Laine, “Mind and Mood,” 239.

ties between the two. Religion and culture mutually rely on one another, and the preservation and deepening understanding of Catholicism comes to preserve Mexican identity as well.

\*\*\*

In the final minutes of our conversations, I asked the women about their children's experiences of Catholicism. Many of the women immediately connected this inquiry to the future stability of their Catholic community. In slightly disheartened tones, they slowly recounted the radical differences in their children's life experience compared with their own, particularly describing their children's improved quality of life because the women themselves at moved to the United States. Now, many of these children refuse to participate in Catholic spaces or to attend weekly mass. Karina wept softly as she described her daughter's lack of faith – a faith upon which Karina has relied heavily in her lifetime, both during her migration to the U.S. and after her arrival at Sagrado Corazón. Many of the women appeared apprehensive about their children's disinterest in both the ritual aspects of Mexican Catholicism and the theological lessons of Sagrado Corazón. As the children continue to navigate life in a different location and culture, which would choose to assimilate migrants rather than accept their differences, this disconnect with the Catholic faith may also sever their ties to Mexican culture. This decline in Catholic involvement reflects the religious reality of Mexico itself, as an increasing number of Catholics convert to Pentecostal or other Evangelical strands of Christianity or leave the church altogether.<sup>77</sup>

Although they have experienced seemingly endless difficulties both in Mexico and in their migration to the United States, the women involved in this research feel a calling to share their

---

<sup>77</sup> Pew Research Center has conducted polls and written commentary on this trend, which I recommend as a starting point for understanding the move toward evangelical Christianity in Mexico. David Masci, "Why has Pentecostalism grown so dramatically in Latin America?," Pew Research Center, accessed February 15, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/14/why-has-pentecostalism-grown-so-dramatically-in-latin-america/>.



faith with those around them through family and service. They find solidarity in the church and hope to share the beauty of that community with others. Even after the migration process and years of living in the U.S., these women still identify as both Mexican and Catholic, and they find comfort in those identities and the communities they form. Although migrating to the United States has required them to assimilate in some ways (by beginning to learn English, working new jobs, or eating different types of food), these women do not immediately lose all connection with their home. As Sagrado Corazón and the empowerment group cultivate an intentionally Mexican atmosphere and community, their Catholicism allows and encourages them to stay connected with their roots. In many ways, this persistence of the Mexican culture and community also explains the younger generations' lack of enthusiasm for the Catholic tradition, as they do not identify so heavily with Mexico – they do not long for that past.

Sociologist Andrés de Francisco, following in the footsteps of Durkheim, suggests that identity depends upon an amalgamation of aspects of life (clothing, art, forms of organization, food, etc.) which may adapt and change at different speeds and in different ways, maintaining various levels of importance for different people. The nucleus within these diffuse categories, however, defines and maintains the identity of individuals and communities. That identity may survive if the aspects surrounding the nucleus change, but it will be lost if the nucleus disappears.<sup>78</sup> The women of Sagrado Corazón have experienced unquantifiable change through their migration, yet they continue to identify as Catholic, and as Mexican, before any identity seemingly associated with their “new” lives in the United States. For them, Catholicism is the nucleus of Mexican identity. Sagrado Corazón provides a sacred space for the women to maintain their connection to Mexico and to their community. The practices which have always defined their experience of

---

<sup>78</sup> Andrés De Francisco, *Sociología y cambio social*, (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, S.A., 1997), 177.

Catholicism have become even more essential to defining their identity as Mexican since arriving in the U.S., as the women are forced to interact with them more thoughtfully and deeply – on a more intellectual level – than ever before. Catholicism, in all its ambiguity and elasticity, still defines what it means to be Mexican for these women. To lose that tradition would fundamentally change who they are.

\*\*\*

The religious experience of these women cannot be characterized as a simple, unidirectional process. Its nuance represents the real emotional process of migration, challenges traditional ideas of assimilation, and pushes us to develop new and more empathetic understandings of human life and existential change. Being Catholic defines who these women are. Their religious rituals and values preserve their identity as “Mexican,” rather than “migrant” or “American.” The continuation of these rituals reinforces the Mexican Catholicism these women remember from their home, and the church’s focus on and creation of community begins the work of creating a new home for the women in the United States. Although their Catholicism may have changed shape in some ways, the women are more capable of actively preserving their tradition and identity in the midst of their new environment. Sagrado Corazón allows each individual to lay down their difficulties at the door. Their community becomes the bridge back into the body of Christ. In this church, Catholicism is the solace and solidarity Mexican women seek in the midst of a new and intimidating world.

Michael Jackson describes the life story of Roberto, a man born in Mexico, forced to migrate to the United States, and ultimately educated at Harvard Divinity School. In explaining the meaning of this experience, Roberto describes:

Although my journey from an unknown town in Mexico to Harvard has been long, perilous, and painful (though at many moments joyful), I know there are more borders to cross, more

fears to overcome, and new limit situations to transcend. Yet I already know that “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil,” for the Divino Compañero del Camino walks with me and my family.<sup>79</sup>

Roberto’s understanding of his journey is starkly similar to that of the women of Sagrado Corazón. These women have faced unspeakable adversity, and although their future will continue to present challenges, they now understand their agency, their power, and their worth. They have Christ, and they have each other. This world will struggle to present anything they cannot face.

---

<sup>79</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 150.

### III. CHAPTER TWO: WEAVING OUR TAPESTRY

On a sunny afternoon in late October 2018, I sat rode the Zorro bus into the Plaza de Armas from my home in the Wanchaq district. As the bus approached the center of the city, I watched through the window as utilitarian-style, concrete apartment buildings and homes turned into older, more intricate architecture. When I arrived in the Plaza, I settled myself on one of the many benches which line the Plaza and waited for 3:00 to arrive. I had traveled into the city center that day to meet with Mirtha Irco, a Peruvian Anthropologist who has herself conducted ethnographic research with the Q'eros in the past. I hoped that Mirtha would serve as my academic advisor for my independent study project. When she found me near the fountain, we strolled over to the nearest café – a tourist-y one called “Cappuccino Cusco” – to sit and chat about my project. In the first weeks of my study away program, I had met with a different advisor, who had coldly informed me that religion was not at all related to migration, and that I would likely need to change the topic of my independent study project. As a result, I felt nervous walking up the back stairwell of the café with Mirtha, worried that she would have a similar response to the work I hoped to do. She ordered a croissant and a cappuccino, and I ordered a café con leche, quietly but confidently (my abundant time spent in coffee shops in Cusco had made me quite skilled with my restaurant manners). She smiled at me, complimenting my Spanish, and I immediately felt at ease, sensing that Mirtha would be the right person to help me with the project. She was warm and welcoming, and she spoke carefully, choosing her words with clear intention. Her demeanor immediately put me at ease, and I felt as though she would understand the importance of the work I hoped to do.

As I poured the tiny pitcher of milk into my coffee, watching it cloud the still, black liquid, Mirtha and I discussed potential next steps for my research. She explained that the Q'ero community would likely respond to my inquiries better if I met with them in person. Although

she has worked with members of the community before, she informed me that finding and securing time for longer interviews would depend upon the community members' trust in me and my ability to visit with them on *their* terms. She told me that, although she had a few people in mind as key figures to interview, we would visit them all at their houses to ask their permission to talk. We set a date to meet at the main bus stop in San Sebastián, a neighborhood removed from the city center, even further south than my district. When Mirtha and I went our separate ways that afternoon, we hugged in the crosswalk of the Plaza as we said goodbye. I smiled to myself as I walked to the bus stop, ignoring the shouts of the bus stewards, who yelled at the pedestrians and other cars which filled the street and slowed the traffic. In the back of my mind, I began to consider questions to ask my potential interviewees.

The next week, when we began the fieldwork period, I took a bus south of the city to the San Sebastián neighborhood, where I got out and waited for Mirtha. When she arrived, we hugged, and she told me to ask the man sitting in the car across the street to take us to Alto Cusco. The Q'ero community which has migrated to the city largely lives in these neighborhoods, a steep hike out of the valley, away from the main roads of the city into poorer residential areas. Until only a few years ago, these taxi services did not even exist, and the older and less physically able members of the community stayed at home most of the time as a result. Since then, a few drivers have begun to organize an informal taxi service, which costs one or two soles (~30-60 cents) per person, to drive members of the community out of the valley and into Alto Cusco.

When we got in the van, we waited for the rest of the seats to fill before we left and began the drive up the steep streets. The driver let passengers off at a few stops, and as we got further up the mountain the roads turned from pavement to dirt. Many of the Q'ero migrants live in this area, in this poorest of neighborhoods. They save money for years after their migration to arrive

at the ability to build a house here. When they finally have enough money, the entire community comes together to construct it, with the understanding that the those giving their time and energy will, someday, receive this same help from their community members in the future. I got out of the van near the top of the steep mountain, at which point I realized Mirtha had made friends with a husband and wife who were also in the van. The husband was traveling to help a fellow Q'ero family construct the roof of their house, and the wife had come to help cook and provide lunch for the workers. Mirtha asked them if they knew anyone in the community who might be helpful for my research. The husband, Víctor, explained that he himself was a paqo – a leader of the Q'ero spiritual rituals. Before we said our goodbyes, he agreed to meet with me that week to discuss his migration experience and his traditions with the Pachamama.

\*\*\*

This understanding among the community – that each will do their part to help the other prosper, whether through the construction of a new roof or through the sharing of coca – is absolutely central to the Q'ero worldview. The Q'eros believe deeply that they are in relationship with one another and with the earth. And they value this belief above all else. The indigenous peoples of the Andes have, for hundreds of years, performed rituals now enveloped within the broad label of “Andean spirituality” (in Spanish, *cosmovisión*),<sup>80</sup> with the Pachamama (Mother Earth) and the Apus (centers of spiritual energy). These practices are rooted in the fundamental belief that the Earth is a living, spiritual being. For the Q'eros, all things of this world (people, animals, natural objects, and cultural objects) have a spirit and an energy, called Animu.<sup>81</sup> All

---

<sup>80</sup> From here on, I will refer to this set of beliefs and practices as “Andean *cosmovisión*,” as this terminology encompasses both the worldview and the spirituality of this tradition more fully. When translated directly, “*cosmovisión*” is often equated as “worldview.” This choice of translation, however, fails to recognize the very *spiritual* elements of this set of beliefs and practices, which I describe in this essay.

<sup>81</sup> Holly Wissler, “Foundations of Andean Cosmology: *Animu*, *Yanantin*, and *Ayni*,” in: Holly Wissler, “From grief joy sing social and cosmic regenerative processes in the songs of Q'eros, Peru.” Florida State University, 2009 (Tesis Doctoral), 42.

objects present in the earth “are engaged as sacred persons; as ‘beings,’ not ‘things,’” and the earth – the Pachamama – is itself a spiritual being.<sup>82</sup> These energies work together to form a necessary duality in every area of life, called Yanantin.<sup>83</sup> As the Pachamama is feminine, most of the Apus (such as mountains, lakes, or streams) are masculine. This duality creates a collaborative relationship among all beings, requiring a reciprocity across difference. This reciprocity, called Ayni, has become the central value of the Andean cosmovisión, harmonizing the duality of Yanantin.<sup>84</sup> The reciprocity of Ayni creates a unity within the natural duality, so that both sides depend on one another. In this way, Ayni facilitates the community’s social system and dictates everyone’s obligations to one another within the community.

The beliefs of the indigenous Andeans remain integral in all aspects of their lives. They not only purport to hold these values, but they also manifest them in their actions toward one another and the land upon which they walk. Di Salvia explains that, over hundreds of years of living on the same land, these communities adopt clothing, food, and schedules which are particular to their way of life. She states:

Such substrata are strongly interrelated: they combine and complement one another, establishing themselves in basic conceptual structures which give meaning to specific beliefs in the conscious vitality of diverse beings in the natural-religious world, as are, for example, the Apus and the Pachamama.<sup>85</sup>

Specific Andean communities have strong relationships not only with the natural world as a broad spiritual concept, but also with the particular land they call home. Some members of the community, known as paqos, have the ability and special responsibility to make offerings to the

---

<sup>82</sup> Jennifer Scheper Hughes, “Mysterium Materiae: Vital Matter and the Object as Evidence in the Study of Religion,” *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 41, no. 4, (November 2012), 16.

<sup>83</sup> Hughes, “Mysterium Materiae,” 45.

<sup>84</sup> Hughes, “Mysterium Materiae,” 45.

<sup>85</sup> Daniela Di Salvia, “Para una dialéctica de la naturaleza andina. Aproximaciones filosófico-antropológicas a las creencias quechuas en los Apus y la Pachamama,” *Gazeta de Antropología* 27, artículo 13 (2011): 10. Translation my own.

Pachamama and communicate with the deities. Each paqo has a different capacity for communication with the divine, and these abilities are organized into categories based on their spiritual power. In the Andean calendar, the month of August marks the beginning of the year and is a time to make pagos (payments) to the Pachamama “so she will bless the agricultural year which also begins in this month.”<sup>86</sup> In this month and at various times in the year, the paqos prepare despachos (offerings) for the Pachamama.<sup>87</sup> These offerings may include coca leaves, sweets, sand, pebbles, and other small gifts, which the paqos wrap in a small blanket and bury underground. The discernment process for becoming a paqo is rather similar to that of becoming a Christian pastor. Young Q’eros may choose to pursue this role on their own, or another paqo may interpret signs from the divine and suggest the opportunity to them. All the paqos begin with a karpay, or initiation ceremony, after years of training under the instruction of a maestro, or mentor. This teacher “trains and perfects them until they are qualified to call and speak with the Apus.”<sup>88</sup> After the karpay, some paqo become pampamisayoq, which have the ability to perform ritual offerings to the Pachamama. Others continue their studies to become altomisayoq, which are able to communicate directly with the Apus.<sup>89</sup>

\*\*\*

As we began to walk the dirt roads of Ununchis, the neighborhood in which many of the Q’ero migrants live, we encountered an older man on the path. Mirtha introduced herself in Quechua, explained my work to him, and he introduced himself as Agustín. From my perspective, he seemed nervous to talk to us, and my beginner’s Quechua course proved severely insufficient

---

<sup>86</sup> Jorge Flores Ochoa, “Los q’ero. Últimos descendientes de los Incas,” en: *Q’ero, el último ayllu inka: homenaje a Oscar Núñez del Prado y a la expedición científica de la UNSAAC a la nación Q’ero en 1955*, 423.

<sup>87</sup> Ochoa, “Los q’ero,” 423.

<sup>88</sup> Ochoa, “Los q’ero,” 423.

<sup>89</sup> Washington Rozas Álvarez, “Los paqos q’eros,” en: *Q’ero, el último ayllu inka: homenaje a Oscar Núñez del Prado y a la expedición científica de la UNSAAC a la nación Q’ero en 1955*, 265.



to be able to understand the conversation completely. After a bit of explaining, however, Mirtha turned to me and asked if a certain date and time would work to meet with Don Agustín, who turned out to be a Q'ero paqo as well. Nearly in shock at our fortune, I took down his contact information and agreed to meet him in the Plaza a few days later to talk about my project. I found myself quite surprised at Mirtha's willingness and ability to breach the unspoken social boundary that exists, at least in the U.S., between those you meet on the street. I could hardly imagine stopping another person and asking for their contact information. But the Q'eros trusted Mirtha – she greeted them in Quechua and knew all the polite formalities of beginning a conversation with them. Beyond that, my ability to say the traditional greetings, showing respect for the Q'eros and their tradition, brought down this initial barrier of discomfort.

Don Agustín instructed us to use the foot path to cross over the bypass to the Salvadores barrio, where his friends Don Claudio and Don Nicolás lived. Mirtha knew these paqos, so visiting them was a beautiful opportunity to see a bit of the Q'eros' lives in the city. When we knocked on their doors, both Don Claudio and Don Nicolás invited us in and asked if we needed anything to drink. As we got settled, I explained the work I hoped to do with them. Some of the Q'eros speak quite advanced Spanish, and in those cases I explained the work and my hope to interview them myself. For others, however, Spanish is more difficult, especially if they haven't lived in Cusco as long. In those circumstances, Mirtha interpreted my explanations into Quechua to help the Q'eros understand me better. We made plans to meet with both Don Nicolás and Don Claudio later in the week for full-length interviews. Leaving the house of Don Claudio, we continued down the road, inadvertently kicking up dust as we did so. Along the way, we happened upon Victoria, the leader of the Q'ero artisanal association, on the road with her sister. Both were dressed in traditional Q'ero clothing, with elaborate weavings around their shoulders and small, rounded

brown hats atop their heads. Although Victoria is not a paqo, her insight as a practitioner of the Andean rituals with the Pachamama felt worthwhile for my project, and we made plans to meet with her as well. Mirtha already knew Victoria and asked her about Doña María, an older woman who Mirtha had met in the past. She informed us that an older woman in the community in Paucartambo – an ancestor to many of those in the Q'ero community – was quite sick. As the final *altomisayoq* among the Q'ero community, Doña María had returned to the countryside to be with the woman and to speak with the Apus on her behalf.

As we climbed down the stairs from the Salvadores barrio, our legs began to grow sore, and by the bottom they felt like Jell-O. In an effort to keep our minds off the pain, Mirtha and I chatted about the progress we had made that day and our hope to come back and meet with Doña María before I finished my project. Her perspective as one of the oldest living Q'eros would be particularly poignant for filling out the depth of my research, and I looked forward to learning from her. We also talked about the difficulty to find resources which would give meaningful insight to my research. Although I could find information about the Q'ero community as a whole, about Andean spirituality, and about the increasing urbanization of Peru through rural-urban migration, it had been difficult to find meaningful contributions to the literature regarding migrants' experiences and the role of their spirituality in that process. Mirtha reassured me that the lack of previous research on the topic only reaffirmed the contribution my work could make to the field, and she reiterated her excitement to assist me along the way.

When I got home to my apartment and my host parents, I sat at my desk, with its blue plexiglass surface, and leaned back in the office chair my parents had bought in preparation for my arrival. They had not expected to host a student so dedicated to her studies (a fact my host mother reiterated to me time and time again – it was a fact adored about me and would never let

me forget). The desk chair had character, as it leaned slightly to one side, never fully stable, and for that I loved it all the more. At my desk that afternoon, I considered the lack of academic surrounding the experience of indigenous migrants, especially in light of the huge movement of the Peruvian population toward the city in recent decades. I found myself reflecting on the work of Talal Asad, who explains:

From the point of view of power, mobility is a convenient feature of the act subsumed, but a necessary one of the subsuming act. For it is by means of geographical and psychological movement that modern power inserts itself into pre-existing structures. That process is necessary to defining existing identities and motives as superfluous, and to constructing others in their place. Meanings are thus not only created, they are also redirected or subverted – as so many novels about indigenous life in the colonies have poignantly depicted.<sup>90</sup>

The maintenance of identity, of tradition, and of community through the existential challenge of migration becomes particularly difficult as indigenous peoples are met with globalized, capitalist political and economic power regimes in the city. That first day of fieldwork, I wrote down a whole host of not-yet fully formed ideas on the subject, most of them out of frustration and curiosity. And then, when my mother called me, I joined her in the kitchen to prepare for family lunch.

\*\*\*

This chapter builds upon and crystallizes many of the themes from Chapter One through a deep look at the migration experience of indigenous peoples in Peru. The forms of both spirituality and migration I explore in this chapter divert from the Catholicism and international migration of Chapter One to focus on indigenous spirituality and *intranational* migration. At a certain level, both these topics are more localized than those of the previous chapter. Indigenous Q'ero traditions, practiced almost exclusively in the high mountains of southern Peru, seem relatively

---

<sup>90</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 11.

minute in comparison to the universality of the Catholic Church. Likewise, the migration of these indigenous families into the city of Cusco does not involve the same complications of border-crossing and legal documentation as does the movement of Mexican migrants across the Rio Grande into the United States. And yet, both these groups of migrants have experienced migration into vastly different worlds than those they have previously known.

In this way, my argument here argues directly against much of the previous scholarship on the Q'eros, which characterizes them as “el último ayllu inca,” or “the last Incan community,”<sup>91</sup> established originally by Anthropologist Jorge Flores Ochoa in 1984.<sup>92</sup> Although his use of this phrase in some ways opened more opportunities for the Q'eros (especially in the tourist industry, which I will discuss a bit later), the label has allowed outside groups to tokenize and de-historicize them. The Q'eros have largely been viewed as static – a community and culture preserved, unchanged, over hundreds of years. This perception is endemic to the academic community, which would prefer to regard indigenous peoples as “untouched” by history.<sup>93</sup> Olinda Celestino explains:

The majority of contemporary scholars use pre-Hispanic data to understand ethnographic materials, forgetting that the Andean rhythm and ritual evolves and has a history, that the majority are not expressions of a religious view that can go back to pre-Hispanic times... Many of them do not thoroughly analyze the ancient liturgical gestures as well as the adjustments, adaptations, and repercussions that have affected them with the introduction of the Roman liturgical system, without leaving aside the Spanish cultural and political contribution.<sup>94</sup>

This sentiment reflects nearly all previous scholarship on the Q'eros. The first recorded article to mention the Q'ero nation was published in 1922, in which the author referred to the nation as

---

<sup>91</sup> This may also be translated as “The last Incan tribe” or “The last Incan group.”

<sup>92</sup> Jorge Flores Ochoa, “¿Why Q'ero?” en: *Q'ero, el último ayllu inka: homenaje a Oscar Núñez del Prado y a la expedición científica de la UNSAAC a la nación Q'ero en 1955*, 29.

<sup>93</sup> James W. Laine, “Mind and Mood in the Study of Religion,” *Elsevier* 40 (2010): 239-240.

Enzo Pace, “Systems Theory and Religion,” *Civitas* 17, no. 2 (May-August 2017): 345.

Olinda Celestino, “Transformaciones religiosas en los Andes peruanos,” *Gazeta de Antropología* 13, artículo 6 (1997): 1.

<sup>94</sup> Celestino, “Transformaciones religiosas,” 8.

primitive, monotonous, passive, melancholic, and sad.<sup>95</sup> The Q'eros lived without contact with general Peruvian society for much of the country's history, and anthropologists did not mention them again until 1955, in a book written by Oscar Nuñez del Prado. In his book, Nuñez largely decontextualized the Q'eros with whom he interacted by highlighting their preservation of tradition through dance and oral tradition.<sup>96</sup> Like the first author, Nuñez characterized the Q'eros as ancient and stagnant. One of the most well-known books about the Q'ero nation is named *Q'ero, el último ayllu inka*,<sup>97</sup> which includes chapters written by a number of different scholars on the environment, technology, social organization, religion, and expressive culture of the Q'ero nation. Although there is a final section dedicated to the Q'eros' response to change in Peru, the included chapters do not discuss the community's spiritual traditions in relationship to Peru's urbanization and globalization. By constructing these spiritual traditions as somehow independent of societal changes – as objects to ogle for their “ancient” and “traditional” ways – nearly every author I have found prevents the reader from viewing the Q'eros as contemporary human beings.

My time with the Q'eros challenges the academy's tendency, as Celestino describes, to mischaracterize indigeneity as a relic of the past. The Q'ero community I observed is dynamic. It experiences change even in the midst of preserving its spiritual traditions, connection with nature, and sense of identity. Spiritual practices are integral to their sense of identity, but they are also central to the surrounding society's more prejudiced perceptions of the community as backward or primitive. I hope the ethnography recounted here might improve our understanding of Q'ero indigeneity and identity as complex and multi-faceted, challenging common rhetoric which perpetuates the societal divide between these communities' life experiences and scholar's

---

<sup>95</sup> Yann Le Borgne, “Évolution de l'indigénisme dans la société péruvienne” *Ateliers d'anthropologie* 25 (2003), accessed November 20, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ateliers.8748>.

<sup>96</sup> Le Borgne, “Évolution de l'indigénisme dans la société péruvienne.”

<sup>97</sup> Nuñez del Prado, et.al.

armchair. For the Religious Studies community, these stories, like those of the women of Sagrado Corazón, may shed light on the experience of embodied spirituality in the process of existential change, and their meaning extends beyond the particularity of the Q'eros themselves. The Q'ero migrants' commitment to spiritual practices and beliefs, which persists despite hardship and cultural unfamiliarity, defines their identity after their migration to the city of Cusco, even as they adopt aspects of Cusqueñan culture.

\*\*\*

In the last 80 years, Peru's population has become increasingly urban, as large numbers of indigenous people migrate from villages in rural Peru to the cities.<sup>98</sup> In 1940, 35 percent of Peruvians lived in urban locations; in 1970, this number had risen to 70 percent.<sup>99</sup> The height of this widespread migration coincided with the political mobilization of indigenous people as they sought equality from the Peruvian government and society.<sup>100</sup> Peru is a profoundly divided country geographically, as the Andes cut down the middle of the country and divide the coast from the rainforest. Now, ten million of the total 31 million Peruvians live in Lima alone, and 17 million live in coastal cities.<sup>101</sup> In the 1970s and 80s, as the indigenous populations revolted against the Peruvian government and its marginalization of their communities, this large-scale migration led to a cultural clash between Peru's indigenous and urban populations – the effects of which can still be seen today. Over time, indigenous migrants began to adopt aspects of urban culture and found ways to participate in the capitalist and increasingly globalized economy of the country.<sup>102</sup> The

---

<sup>98</sup> Ronald Skeldon, "The Evolution of Migration Patterns During Urbanization in Peru," *Geographical Review* 67, no. 4 (October 1977): 394.

<sup>99</sup> Pajuelo Teves, *An invisible river*, 373.

<sup>100</sup> Ramón Pajuelo Teves, *An invisible river: essays about politics, conflict, memory, and the indigenous movement in Peru and the Andes*, Lima: Ríos Profundos Editores, 2016: 373. Translation my own.

<sup>101</sup> Pajuelo Teves, *An invisible river*, 373.

<sup>102</sup> Those indigenous migrants who have begun to accept "urban" culture are often described within Peru as "cholos." Pajuelo Teves describes the process of adopting these character / cultural traits as "cholicación." The

country is now politically centrist, reflecting its difficulty to balance the interests of the indigenous populations and the middle-class mestizos. Multiple political parties continue to support policies which suppress indigenous voices and interests, and these politicians receive support from more than a few urban mestizos who would prefer the indigenous people stay in their villages.

The migration of the Q'ero community in particular is a more recent development in this longer migration trend. The Q'eros originate from in or near Paucartambo, a small mountain village Northwest of Cusco, and have migrated to the city in recent years to pursue educational opportunities for their children and to work in the tourism industry. Approximately 75 families now live in Cusco, largely in the San Sebastián district, about 30 minutes south of the Plaza de Armas.<sup>103</sup> The majority of this community lives in neighborhoods such as Salvadores and Ununchis, in Alto Cusco (Upper Cusco). As the city is settled in a valley in the Andes mountain range, these neighborhoods scale the sides of the mountains which form the edge of the city. The plots of land are difficult to reach, geographically separating the indigenous community from the rest of the Cusqueñan society.

Today, the Q'ero nation encompasses five communities, totaling some 3000 members. The academic community and Cusqueñan society have perceived the Q'eros as unchanging, citing the preservation of parts of the Q'ero culture (for example, indigenous clothing and the Quechua language) as evidence. These “‘fixed’ ideas of indigenous status – markers of skin color, place of residence, and other cultural indices and practices (e.g., language, dress, diet, ritual celebrations)” have allowed the Peruvian society and government to ignore “the way that indigenous identity in practice is actually multiple, fluid, and contextually shaped.”<sup>104</sup> While tourists and some

---

label “cholos” is used by many mestizos in the city as a derogatory term for indigenous migrants in an effort to keep those who have moved to the city at an arm’s length, even as they begin to assimilate to urban life.

<sup>103</sup> Data collected during fieldwork from interviewee Víctor Machaca.

<sup>104</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism*, 197.

Cusqueños give these migrants profound respect, believing them to be “authentic Andean wise,” many of them view the migrants as poor, uneducated, and incompetent.<sup>105</sup> Above all, they are not “modern” enough. Only recently have scholarly investigations begun to discuss the *change* in indigenous Andeans’ experience of life, an academic interest propelled by the impending doom of climate change and based upon indigenous peoples’ strong connections with the earth.<sup>106</sup> My observations from working with the Q’ero migrants, however, challenge rhetoric which would choose to exotify them. While the academic community might assume that the effects of global warming would fundamentally change indigenous peoples’ relationships with the earth, it seemed to me that the rituals and gratitude for the Pachamama has only grown. Meanwhile, the Q’eros have adopted many of Cusco’s other societal norms.

\*\*\*

When I climbed out of the taxi to Alto Cusco on the day of my first interview, with Señora Victoria, her children greeted me with the widest of grins, immediately asking if I spoke English. I responded that I did, and the eldest daughter attempted to show off her English skills by saying the words “star” and “night” and “sun” and “moon.” On the outside, I showed my awe at her English abilities. But internally, I was shocked. My host cousins were learning English as well, but these indigenous children, who were recent migrants to the city? During our interview, Señora Victoria informed me that she and her husband had moved to the city specifically for that reason. She wanted her children to receive a better education than she had, and the government did not provide those resources in villages like Paucartambo. As we sat there, in the tiny courtyard of Victoria’s home, I watched her hands work deftly with the weaving before her. She pulled the

---

<sup>105</sup> Le Borgne, “Évolution de l’indigénisme dans la société péruvienne.”

<sup>106</sup> Sébastien Boillat and Fikret Berkes, “Perception and Interpretation of Climate Change among Quechua Farmers of Bolivia: Indigenous Knowledge as a Resource for Adaptive Capacity,” *Ecology and Society* 18, no. 4 (2013), 21.



strings taught, wove the small wooden guide through the loom, and pulled the strings taught again. I wondered to myself, marveling at the beauty of the weaving revealing itself before me, how this community could give up the slow and steady sureness of life in Paucartambo. Cusco brought so much uncertainty with it – how and why did they move at all? Would their children regret that decision at all?

All these questions began to guide my internal thinking as I conducted the rest of my observations that week and the next. Each and every one of those I interviewed had a very different story – some had moved to Cusco only very recently, while others had been there for over a decade. Some had moved with families, while others had moved alone. Even their basic data reveals some of the breadth and abundance of their experiences with the migration process:

	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Years in Cusco</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Q'ero Community</b>
<b>La Señora Victoria</b>	06 NOV 2018	32	10	Weaving director	N/A
<b>Víctor Paucar Machaca</b>	07 NOV 2018	42	1	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	Marache
<b>Don Agustín</b>	07 NOV 2018	57	14	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	N/A
<b>Don Claudio</b>	09 NOV 2018	66	15	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	Hatun Q'ero
<b>Don Nicolás</b>	09 NOV 2018	65	3	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	Hatun Q'ero
<b>Doña María</b>	12 NOV 2018	91	12	<i>Altomisayoq</i>	Kiko Grande

Although this migration has largely been motivated by the economic benefits involved with living in urban centers, the migrants' whole lives – not just their location or their financial stability – have been affected by the migration process. The majority of the participants in this investigation moved to Cusco with the hopes of giving their children a better education and a better future.

Some also mentioned they had struggled with their shepherding and agricultural practices, even with crops they've grown for decades. In recent years, anthropologists and politicians have highlighted the need for material resources for indigenous migrants (choosing not to acknowledge, in many cases, the systemic, ingrained inequalities among the Peruvian population which create these material disparities). For example, a survey conducted in 2018, which involved 522 participants, sought to explore and compare the material resources and quality of life of both indigenous migrants and mestizo non-migrants in the Madre de Dios region.<sup>107</sup> The authors discuss food security, access to water, health, and financial capital, among other factors. As we might expect, the investigation's results reveal a disparity in access to these factors between the migrants and the non-migrants, with indigenous individuals falling short of the prosperity of their mestizo counterparts. At the end of the article, however, the authors fail to interact more deeply with the reasons these inequalities exist at all. Instead, they place the blame for these material inequalities with the migrant community itself, simply suggesting that they should seek better leadership.

In a similar vein, an ethnography of indigenous Amazonian youth explains that migration is an instrument to survive in an increasingly demanding economy. Modernization in Peru is intricately related to the urban-rural divide which has resulted from the rapid urbanization of the country in the last decades, and the Peruvian government has prioritized the infrastructure of its cities over the preservation and advancement of opportunities for rural areas. This imbalance of resources profoundly impacts the livelihoods of those living outside urban areas. As such, migration becomes an instrument for improving the lives of both the individual and the

---

<sup>107</sup> Jensen, et.al, "Small scale migration along the interoceanic highway in Madre de Dios, Peru: an exploration of community perceptions and dynamics due to migration," *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 18, no. 12 (2018): 1-14.

community.<sup>108</sup> Importantly, Steele perceives urban life as able to provide more opportunities for advancement for indigenous youth than rural life could. Her project assumes that modernization and advancement strictly follow the process described by Western, capitalist theorists. In addition, she assumes that the educational opportunities chosen by these youth after their migration to the city inherently contradict their indigenous communities' values. But these educational opportunities do not necessarily impose a wholly different culture than that of the past. This type of cultural change involves the acceptance of Western ideas in an effort to keep pace with an urbanizing and globalizing Peruvian culture – in an effort to support the family members who can no longer do that work.

These drastic differences in the quality of life of indigenous peoples and urban society also reflect the social inequalities of indigenous peoples both in Peru as a whole and throughout Latin America. Ortiz and Pombo explain that the creation of the Peruvian state, and the adoption and expansion of the capitalist economy beyond Peru's borders, have depleted what was once a thriving rural, agrarian lifestyle and has impacted the indigenous peoples in the region most directly.<sup>109</sup> They explain:

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL, 2012), using data for 2007–2011, the indigenous population of Latin American countries has higher percentages of poverty than the general population. In particular, poverty is worse for indigenous people in Bolivia (59.87 percent compared with 42.4 percent), Guatemala (72.31 percent compared with 54.8 percent), and Peru (55.42 percent compared with 27.8 percent).<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> Diana Steele, "Higher Education and Urban Migration for Community Resilience: Indigenous Amazonian Youth Promoting Place-Based Livelihoods and Identities in Peru" *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 49 (2018): 89-105.

<sup>109</sup> Laura Velasco Ortiz and Dolores París Pombo, "Indigenous Migration in Mexico and Central America: Interethnic Relations and Identity Transformations," *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 196, 41 no. 3 (May 2014), 6.

<sup>110</sup> Velasco Ortiz and París Pombo, "Indigenous Migration," 6.

The migration of indigenous populations like that of the Q'eros is not only a response to this pervasive and growing poverty but is also a demonstration of their hope for further financial well-being in the city. They participate in the tourism industry in an effort to adapt to the increasingly global, capitalist economy of Peru. For some, this search for financial opportunity even becomes a transnational one, as they move from their home countries toward the global North. The logic of this mobility does not rely upon the creation of the nation-states of Bolivia, Guatemala, or Peru, but stems instead from the concepts of local and transnational community.<sup>111</sup> Indigenous migrants conceive of themselves as still connected, through their indigenous identities, to those who have gone before them and to those they leave behind.

\*\*\*

When I finished my interview with Victoria, I stood in the dirt courtyard of the house while Mirtha talked to Victoria's husband. Over the hand-formed clay blocks, which formed the wall around the yard, I could see all of Cusco – the tiny airport, bustling with tourists in the center of the valley; the Avenida del Sol next to it, running from San Sebastián all the way to the Plaza de Armas; Sacsayhuaman (an indigenous sacred site) and the Pukamuqu statue (a white rendition of Jesus Christ) overlooking the Plaza at the other end of the valley. In that moment, I began my reflection process. I began to answer the questions I had posed to myself only 45 minutes earlier. And it became clear to me that the Q'eros move to the city for the same reason that the women of Sagrado Corazón move to Minnesota. They are in search of something more, and they survive that change through the practices, beliefs, and communities they have already established as essential for their lives.

---

<sup>111</sup> Velasco Ortiz and París Pombo, "Indigenous Migration," 9.

These practices revealed their abundance to me slowly but surely over the course of my fieldwork. Victor, Don Agustín, Don Claudio, and Don Nicolás – the four pampamisayoq – explained their rituals with the Pachamama for me. These paqos have the ability to communicate with the Pachamama and give offerings to her to ask for the wellbeing and health of their community. They do the Q'ero ceremonies, both in Paucartambo and in the city, to ask the Pachamama to give her energy and assistance to the community. This description of the offering is very similar to that described in previous academic studies about the Q'eros. Out of respect for the Pachamama, they perform their ceremonies in Quechua and wear their ancestors' traditional style of clothing. The men wear black ponchos and multi-colored woven hats, with elaborate pom-poms atop their heads, flaps that cover their ears, and long braids which hang down either side. The paqos collect coca from each person present at the offering, blessing and arranging it on top of a hand-woven blanket prepared by the women of the community. Then, they adorn the blanket with cookies, liquor, flowers, and other small items to please the Pachamama. Together, these small gifts create the despacho which they ultimately give to the Pachamama. The paqos wrap the blanket and everything inside, bless it by calling the Apus and the Pachamama, and finally burn or bury it. This final step is a sacrifice to the Pachamama, which they hope will please her and bring them her guidance.

Doña María, the last altomisayoq of the Q'ero nation and the only female paqo that I interviewed, performs a different ritual than do the pampamisayoq. As the most skilled of the paqos, she has the ability to communicate directly with the Apus. During her ritual, she wears a black skirt (called a pollera), a colorful woven blanket pinned around her shoulders like a shawl (Ilikya), and a brown sombrero with a hand-beaded belt around it. Doña María performs this ritual sitting on the floor in a completely dark room in the countryside. She explains, “you don't need

to see – you only need to hear the Apus.” During the ritual, Doña María communicates directly with and “walks with the Apus,” which come in the form of birds, and asks for their protection. She speaks in an ancient form of Quechua, one which you would not hear today in the community. As Doña María is the last of the altomisayoq in the entire Q’ero nation, all the people ask for her services. She travels almost constantly between Paucartambo and Cusco, and she is renowned around the world for her abilities to communicate with the Apus. As such, she has traveled to other countries in South America, Europe, and Africa to perform the rituals as well.

These offerings are part of everyday life for the Q’eros. In Paucartambo, they perform the ceremonies for the fields, the animals, and the crops which provide for the community. They perform a different offering for each animal (llama, alpaca, sheep, etc.) and each plant (corn, potatoes, etc.), and the specific objective of each offering depends entirely on what the coca leaves indicate about the situation. They give small offerings to the Pachamama before beginning to weave, work, and eat. All their actions revolve around creating deeper connections with the earth, and the effectiveness of these actions comes through love and respect for the earth at their feet. These beliefs in the energy and spirit of all living beings weaves itself through every daily ritual in the Q’ero community. Both in Paucartambo and in Cusco, the Q’eros pour out their first sips of chicha and onto the earth beneath their feet, in recognition to the Pachamama who provides them with all they have. Throughout their migration, they have performed offerings in the same way, gathering and blessing the coca and the despacho, using their Quechua even as they learn Spanish, and adorning themselves in the weavings of their ancestors.

And yet, some of the circumstances of these rituals have changed. In particular, my interviewees share a newly difficult financial situation in the city. In Paucartambo, all the men worked as subsistence farmers. As they grew most of what they needed, they supported their

families with the few crops they produced in excess of their own needs. As paqos, they performed ceremonies for their fellow Q'eros in Paucartambo for their health, work, and agriculture – to ask the help of the Pachamama and the Apus in their lives. In Cusco, however, the paqos have begun to ask the Pachamama for money and work opportunities. Now, the community only comes together in its entirety twice a year: in August, to celebrate the month of the earth, and in January, to celebrate Carnaval.<sup>112</sup> Although the Q'eros have extensive agricultural knowledge, with the changing climate and economy of Peru, their crops and livestock in Paucartambo can no longer sustain them. Without crops to support, they ask the Pachamama for the health and well-being of their community and for the support of the Cusqueñan and foreign believers who participate in their offerings through the tourist industry. In Cusco, they have to find a new source of work – sometimes at 70 or 80 years old. Understandably, they draw upon their knowledge of the earth and its spirits. Don Nicolás told me that, although they had done offerings to ask for the health of their work in Paucartambo, the need for money and financial stability has become more pressing in Cusco. Now, they have to ask the Pachamama directly for employment opportunities, as their well-being is directly affected by their ability to make a steady income.

The Q'eros' own participation in the offerings has also changed with their migration. In Paucartambo, they do the rituals together, as a community. But in Cusco, they live in different neighborhoods and have to do the more regular offerings on their own, away from the rest of their community. In addition, the strength of the Apus has diminished as they've moved farther away from their ancestral land. This lack of energy seemed to stem from the urban environment and lack of physical soil, fields, and crops which connect the Q'eros with the Pachamama. Amidst the

---

<sup>112</sup> Carnaval is a Latin American Catholic celebration held in the five days before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. Q'ero participation in and dedication to this ritual is evidence of their practice of a hybridized Andean Catholic tradition.

noise of the city, they struggle to find a calm location to perform the offerings. Rather than perform the ritual improperly, in the hustle and bustle of the city, they go to the outskirts Cusco. They call the Apus closest to Cusco in addition to those in Paucartambo, to ask for their approval and assistance in the offerings even in their migration away from their land.

During the interviews, I intentionally asked the Q'eros what difficulties they have experienced because of their migration to Cusco. Initially, they insisted that life in Cusco is fine, and that they had improved the lives of their children and grandchildren by coming to the city. But as they considered the question more, they all began to identify significant changes in their lifestyle and the tension they feel as they assimilate to urban life. Don Claudio described living in Cusco as a “sacrifice.” In choosing to pursue a better future for their children and grandchildren, they also let go of traditions and daily routines which have been meaningful for them. In Paucartambo, everything relies on nature. They used the sun to know when to wake up, when to work, when to eat, and when to sleep. They did not rely on a clock or any other human-made schedule; they only relied on nature. And thus, they connected more easily with the Pachamama, as their whole lives relied on her. In Cusco, the urban society has the privilege of shaping the Q'eros' lives. “There are always difficulties in the city,” Don Agustín lamented. The migrants operate within societal expectations of time, rushing from one place to the next in the busy city. While they once ate only what they could grow, especially chuño, moraya, and potatoes – or in Don Agustín's words, “natural food” – they now eat the foods common to the urban community, such as rice and wheat. This “urban food,” as Don Agustín named it, is cheap and quick. But these foods also make the Q'eros get sick more quickly, because it is not naturally produced. The culture of Cusco – the cars and trash in Cusco, which make too much noise and clutter the street – also clutters the mind. The racing pace of life in Cusco blocks its people from truly connecting with the earth at their feet.



As time went by, it became clear that the migrants' financial insecurities are central to this difficulty. They commented: "everything is money in the city" (Don Claudio); "if you don't do [the offering], there is not work, and there is not money" (Don Nicolás); and, "here in Cusco, what you need is entirely money" (Doña María). The migrants need money even to move to Cusco in the first place, and then they need even more to build a home and live there. After living their entire lives as subsistence farmers, buying land and supplies to build a house poses many barriers to the migrants. Don Nicolás has lived in Cusco for three years, but he still does not have his own house and continues to live with his sister and brother-in-law. The sheer lack of space in the city bars the Q'eros from growing crops or raising animals, and the migrants have to find other ways to support their families financially. Many of the paqos have begun to perform offerings for the Pachamama for tourists, in an effort to make money and support their families. Even as these rituals afford them the opportunity to survive in the midst of a rapidly expanding economy, this shift also decreases their agency and independence in the ritual performance. Don Nicolás expressed extreme discomfort with his dependence on non-Q'eros. As Doña María described, "in the community there is land, animals; we didn't have money, but it wasn't that necessary either." With the loss of their crops and livestock, they are less self-sufficient. The offerings they once did for their own people and the artisanal weavings they once used to keep warm and to honor the Pachamama have now become sites for commodification. Although these traditions remain meaningful to the Q'eros themselves, they have had to be cautious in the ways they market these experiences to tourists, for the preservation of their own culture.

Adjusting to the spoken language has also been difficult for the Q'ero migrants. As their first language in Paucartambo is Quechua, many of them had not learned any Spanish before moving to Cusco. Don Agustín, Don Nicolás, and Doña María (the three oldest) have found it

especially difficult to learn Spanish and to find ways to communicate in their new environment. Although they have all attempted to learn Spanish little by little, they feel much more comfortable speaking Quechua, and learning a new language takes time. In addition, Cusqueñan society expects the migrants to assimilate to their lifestyle – there is no impetus for them to learn Quechua.<sup>113</sup> As they become further removed from their ancestral land, however, their connections become more and more difficult to preserve. The stress of moving to the city has flipped the migrants' experience of life, as they try to keep pace with the culture and economy around them. All these difficulties fragment the Q'eros' lives. Especially at the beginning, Doña María cried for her community. She missed her land, her people, and her Apus. She felt a deep and profound sense of loneliness and longing for the past. Even at 91 years old – even as the most skilled of the paqos in her spiritual practice and belief – her grounding gave way as she adjusted to the newness of life in Cusco.

As the space around the Q'eros shifts, the values presented to them do as well. This change causes emotional trauma for the migrants, who no longer settle gracefully into the lifestyle and cosmovisión which once defined their livelihoods. Now, their daily lives are defined by the space between these two worlds – the tension between their values and those of the people around them.

\*\*\*

---

<sup>113</sup> Peru, like many other Latin American countries, has begun to create Intercultural Bilingual Education systems which purportedly aim to address the educational needs of indigenous communities. However, in practice these systems often privilege the Spanish language, forcing indigenous students to learn Spanish while using Quechua and other indigenous languages as opportunities for nominal, but not particularly profound, integration of indigenous languages and culture. For more information on the implementation of these systems and their effectiveness, I recommend exploring these resources:

María Elena García, "Rethinking Bilingual Education in Peru: Intercultural Politics, State Policy and Indigenous Rights," *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 7, no. 5 (2004): 348-367.

Nancy H. Hornberger and Luis Enrique López, "Policy, Possibility and Paradox: Indigenous Multilingualism and Education in Peru and Bolivia," in *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education*, ed. Jasone Cenoz and Fred Genesee (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998), 206-242.

Nancy H. Hornberger, "Bilingual education success, but policy failure," *Language in Society* 16, no. 2 (1987): 205-226.

It is essential to note that this experience of change is not unique to the contemporary period. Long before the Spanish arrived in modern-day Peru, the Q'eros believed that the spirit of the Pachamama (Mother Earth) lived in the fields and gave energy and strength to the crops, animals, and plants. Members of the community paid their respects to her by pouring their first gulps of chicha (a local liquor made from corn) and wine on the soil for her. They also gave her a periodic ritual offering to ask for her blessing on the health of the land.<sup>114</sup> By contrast, the Apus, or supernatural beings that live in the mountains, became “the symbol of the ideal life,” as virtuous and powerful natural spirits.<sup>115</sup> Only especially skilled paqos had the ability to communicate with them. The rituals the Q'eros performed were integrally tied to the land upon which they lived, and their spiritual connection to the land permeated every area of their lives.<sup>116</sup> In his ethnography, Ochoa described this connection as a “strong religious feeling which impregnates [the Q'ero community's] activities.”<sup>117</sup> With the arrival of the Spanish, many indigenous communities in the region began to practice Catholicism in addition to Andean spiritual practices. Today, the interaction of these two traditions is deeply related to the missionary work of the colonial period. Around the world, “the violence of conquest bled irredeemably into the project of conversion, so that the two often constituted the same thing.”<sup>118</sup> In dominating and converting the indigenous peoples of the region, missionaries to Latin America “mobilized some gods as allies of the state, while criminalizing or marginalizing others that could not be so mobilized; or else they

---

<sup>114</sup> Álvarez, “Los paqos Q'eros,” 266.

<sup>115</sup> Ochoa, “*Q'ero, el último ayllu inka*,” 422.

<sup>116</sup> Indigenous identity in the Andes is based on a strong connection with the various communities' ancestral lands. The communities organize their land in three spaces, which facilitate their various daily activities. This organization of these spaces is particular to each Andean community and ancestral land, but it is recognized as “*verticalidad andina*,” or “Andean verticality” in the literature. At 3500 to 4000 meters, the first space contains the families' homes. The second, slightly higher up the mountain, serves principally for political actions and religious practices. Finally, the third space contains the fields and houses where farmers stay during periods of work.

<sup>117</sup> Ochoa, “The Q'eros. Last descendants of the Incas,” 422.

<sup>118</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*, edited by Kristin Norget, Valentine Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 7.

transformed these others by labeling them as ‘culture’ or ‘folklore’ destined for the tourist itinerary or the museum.”<sup>119</sup>

As a result, their conversion became less of a “before” and “after” narrative, and more of a transition toward and adoption of new ideas *in addition to* those of the past. “Folk” or “popular” Catholicism, which integrated these aspects of the indigenous culture, was marginally accepted as a local iteration of the universal church. Evidence of this hybridization may be seen at religious festivals such as Quyllurit’i, a celebration which draws thousands of indigenous Quechua and Aymara from the surrounding regions to venerate an image of the crucified Jesus, painted on the side of a boulder. Like many sites and festivals in Latin America, the story and beliefs surrounding Quyllurit’i have pre-Columbian origins and were likely revised and redefined following the colonization of the region by the Spanish crown. The festival as it exists now has become a truly unique experience which involves traditions and beliefs from both indigenous spirituality and Christianity. The majority of the Q’eros identify as Catholic and believe in the Christian God (who they call Taytaychis, in Quechua – a direct translation of “Our Father”), as well as Jesus Christ and the Christian saints. They believe that the saints live in the hanaq pacha (Heaven), and the community performs traditional offerings and masses for each one.<sup>120</sup> As with the Mexican cultural traditions of Sagrado Corazón, the Catholic tradition has stretched itself to encompass the cultural practices of the locals in Peru.

As I referenced in Chapter One, many scholars have discussed the hybridization of these traditions, especially in the Americas. But academic discussion surrounding the hybridization of these traditions flows in and through various levels of specificity. At the core, those who discuss this phenomenon are often concerned by the authenticity, or lack thereof, of these practices and

---

<sup>119</sup> The Anthropology of Catholicism, 4.

<sup>120</sup> Álvarez, “Los paqos Q’eros,” 267.

beliefs. Manuel Marzal and Manuel Gutiérrez Estévez both wrote on the Andean indigenous interaction with Catholicism in particular, but they espouse distinctly divergent understandings and opinions of the matter. Although he makes a courtesy reference to the internal diversity of Catholicism, Marzal's argument focuses much more on the ways Catholicism has changed and affected Andean spiritual traditions, particularly in the offering to the Pachamama and in the Andean myths.<sup>121</sup> As a result, he ignores almost entirely the effects of this hybridization on Catholicism itself. Similarly, in an intriguing ethnography of the Intic Churincuna community (located in the Sacred Valley), Anthropologist Michael Hill explains that this group has incorporated practices and beliefs from various traditions around the world, not just Catholicism, into their Andean traditions. He attributes this changing spiritual tradition and the influence of other global spiritualities to the growth of the tourism industry in Peru. But his discussion of the Intic Churincuna is weighed down by its attempt to place judgment on the authenticity and intention behind the indigenous peoples' participation in these hybridized traditions. He describes the practice as "a purportedly 'authentic' Quechua spiritual tradition," implicitly presuming that the beliefs and practices of Andean peoples could not, in their simplicity, accommodate other cultural and spiritual practices and beliefs.<sup>122</sup>

Gutiérrez directly challenges Marzal's understanding of this integration and offers a broader understanding of the concept in the Andean world. Specifically, he asserts, "It's not enough for us to say that the elements incorporated are 'contradictory' because, precisely, what these cultures show is that the contradictory does not constitute the incompatible."<sup>123</sup> Gutiérrez

---

<sup>121</sup> Manuel Marzal, *Tierra Encantada: Tratado de antropología religiosa de América Latina*, (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2002): 202-205..

<sup>122</sup> Michael Hill, "Myth, Globalization, and Mestizaje in New Age Andean Religion: The *Intic Churincuna* (Children of the Sun) of Urubamba, Peru," *Ethnohistory* 57 (Spring 2010): 264.

<sup>123</sup> Manuel Gutiérrez Estévez, "Otra vez sobre sincretismo," en: *Los Rostros de La Tierra Encantada: Religión, evangelización y sincretismo en el Nuevo Mundo*, editado por José Sánchez Paredes y Marco Curatola Petrocchi, (Lima: Fondo Editorial, 2013): 519.

takes a conscious step away from the scholarly normativity of monotheism and focuses on the epistemological connections and intersections of these belief systems, rather than attempting to delineate them.<sup>124</sup> José Luis González also describes this phenomenon:

The Spanish also combined the beliefs which they had brought from Castilla with the indigenous practices, rituals, and beliefs. It seems that they also felt the need for a new and functional synthesis for the new social and culturally unprecedented situation in which they found themselves in America.<sup>125</sup>

Gutiérrez and González build upon our understanding of the elasticity of Catholicism which we already observed at Sagrado Corazón. In the Andes, as in Mexico, the integration of religion and culture functioned (and continues to function) in both directions, affecting not only the indigenous communities, but also the colonizers. All those I interviewed as part of this project identify as Catholic – and yet, they each have their own relationship with the mass and perform a variety of rituals with the Catholic saints. Señora Victoria attends mass with her husband and children once or twice a month. Víctor told me that he attends mass once a year, as he did in Paucartambo. Don Claudio attends with his family for important celebrations, like Christmas, or Holy Week and Easter. Don Nicolás attends once a month. Doña María goes to mass twice a month in San Sebastián or Santa Rosa, when she isn't traveling. A few of my interviewees had been married by the church in Paucartambo, before their migration to the city. And Don Nicolás was even baptized in Quyllurit'i when he was a young boy.

Although most of the Q'eros do not attend Catholic mass very frequently, their Catholic beliefs integrated themselves into the Andean cosmovisión. Don Agustín interchangeably asks El Señor de Huanca, God, Jesus Christ, and the Christian saints for permission before performing an

---

<sup>124</sup> Gutiérrez Estévez, "Otra vez sobre sincretismo," 520.

<sup>125</sup> José Luis González, "Sincretismo: el proceso hacia una nueva identidad religiosa y cultural," en: *Los Rostros de La Tierra Encantada: Religión, evangelización y sincretismo en el Nuevo Mundo*, editado por José Sánchez Paredes y Marco Curatola Petrocchi, (Lima: Fondo Editorial, 2013): 542.

offering to the Pachamama. Don Claudio expressed the same sentiment, saying that he calls upon not only the Apus, Tayta Inti (father sun), and Mamakilla (mother moon) during the offering, but also the Christian God and Jesus Christ. Doña María includes the Saints, the Virgin Mary, God, and Jesus Christ in her ceremony. But none of these sacred beings takes precedence over the others. Rather, the Q'eros believe equally in the power of the Apus (Doña María specifically mentioned a pair of Apus named Inti Paykiki and Anawarqe), the Pachamama, God, Jesus Christ, their ancestors, the chaskas (stars), Tayta Inti, and Mamakilla. For the Q'eros, Andean cosmovisión and Catholicism do not contradict or compete with each other; they exist as *one* tradition: Andean Catholicism.

But the “complex, heterogeneous colonial and postcolonial histories and religiosities of these ‘marginal’ Catholics” – the abundant histories and contemporary practices of Sagrado Corazón and of the Q'eros – remain largely undiscussed.<sup>126</sup> To this day, the global Catholic institution remains ambivalent toward these traditional practices in an “attempt to engage indigenous-popular religious sensibilities and devotion to sacred images while at the same time implicitly trying to contain them, weaving their distinct local historical threads seamlessly into the fabric of a global Catholic history.”<sup>127</sup> In conquering and converting the indigenous peoples of Latin America, the Spanish Catholic missionaries forced “religion” upon them and explicitly determined and propagated the indigenous peoples’ *lack* of religion. And to this day, when asked about their “religion” (translated as “iñiy,” in Quechua, or “religión,” in Spanish), most indigenous people in the Andes will refer to their experience of Catholicism, rather than describing their connection with the Pachamama. The Catholic institution’s refusal to discuss this history,

---

<sup>126</sup> *The Anthropology of Catholicism*, 197.

<sup>127</sup> Kristin Norget, “Popes, Saints, Beato Bones and other Images at War: Religious Mediation and the Translocal Roman Catholic Church,” *Equinox Publishing* 5, no. 3 (2009), 337.

especially given its truth across many of the former colonies, points to the still-existent hierarchical power of the tradition as it exists across the globe. What's more, scholars like Marzal and Hill also fail to recognize the value of these communities' traditions as they adapt and change along with the world around them. They implicitly accept the notion that indigenous traditions cannot and should not change – that they should remain “pure” in some way. But this integration process – of both the Intic Churincuna and the Q'eros – does not de-legitimize their practices or the authenticity of the Andean cosmovisión. Until the academy has a clearer understanding of what we mean when we use the word “authentic,” discussion or judgment of the authenticity of these practices perpetuate a colonial narrative which privileges the Westerner and the scholar as the judges of the experience of non-Western practitioners.

\*\*\*

Since initial contact with indigenous groups like the Q'eros, the characterization of indigenous spirituality as a relic of the past (i.e. a tradition to be studied and gawked at, but never to be followed) has grown in popularity among the Cusqueñan society. After the discovery of archaeological sites like Machu Picchu, and with the growth of the tourism industry thereafter, white tourists from the United States and Europe began to take advantage of the indigenous peoples for their own spiritual gratification.<sup>128</sup> The Q'eros participate in Peru's economy through this “mystic tourism” industry, performing their Andean rituals for white tourists in exchange for money.<sup>129</sup> In participating in these rituals, tourists often approach these practices either as a

---

<sup>128</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson states, “Colonization morphologises in multiple ways as it continues to operate discursively and materially within cultural formations, institutions and public culture,” which is particularly apt for considering the role of tourism in defining indigenous spirituality.

Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Critical Indigenous Theory,” *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (September 2009): 12.

<sup>129</sup> Mystic tourism originates from the “indigenismo” movement which occurred in both Mexico and Peru starting in the 1920s. This movement, although seemingly well-intentioned (political actors wanted to better integrate dialogue with indigenous groups into their policy), the indigenismo which resulted in the contemporary tourist movement lauded indigenous cultural heritage as a relic of the past. As such, it largely ignored the growing relationship between the indigenous and Spanish cultures.



voyeuristic opportunity for self-aggrandizement or as an opportunity to manifest their “spiritual, but not religious,” experience of the world. These tourists remove Andean spirituality from its cultural and community-based context by refusing to submit to the authoritative structures which have formed Andean cosmovisión throughout its history.

With their migration into the city, and the moniker given by Ochoa in the 1980s as “el ultimo ayllu inka,” the Q’ero paqos have gained particular renown for their abilities and Andean wisdom.<sup>130</sup> The people of the city have begun to solicit the services of the Q’eros, “so that they’ll perform the ceremonies, although with the intentions characteristic of city life.”<sup>131</sup> The growth of the mystic tourism industry has similarly purported and perpetuated a misleading representation of both the Q’ero people and their ritual practices. Tourists who reduce these rituals to facilitate their own individualistic interaction with the earth de-historicize contemporary indigenous communities like the Q’eros.<sup>132</sup> These tourist practices, not to mention the scholarly community’s analysis of them, often conceives of religion and spirituality in ahistorical, apolitical, and fetishized ways, doing a deep disservice to the traditions they explore.<sup>133</sup> In his book, McCutcheon voices dissatisfaction with both the New Age spiritual movement and the academy for these actions.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> Various authors have discussed and analyzed both the merits and the drawbacks of indigenous participation in tourist activities.<sup>130</sup> Scholars have recently begun engaging in more detailed discussions regarding the economic and political factors which led these industries to emerge, as well as the imperial voyeuristic tendencies which have allowed them to flourish. Swatos and Tomasi touched on the development of New Age spirituality in 2002, attributing much of the interest in these “traditional” spiritual practices to the growth of neoliberal individualism (208). For more discussion of the role of the tourism industry in indigenous life, see the work of Fotiou Evgenia, María Chávez Quispe, Stewart Muir, and Elizabeth Tapia.

*From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety*, ed. William H. Swatos, Jr. and Luigi Tomasi (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002).

<sup>131</sup> Data collected during fieldwork. Translation my own.

<sup>132</sup> James W. Laine, “Mind and Mood in the Study of Religion,” *Elsevier* 40 (2010): 239-240.

Olinda Celestino, “Transformaciones religiosas en los Andes peruanos.” *Gazeta de Antropología* 13, artículo 6 (1997): 1.

<sup>133</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), 179.

<sup>134</sup> This is a dissatisfaction which indigenous scholars like Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Chris Andersen, Jodi A. Byrd, and Sylvia Marcos also express. I especially recommend their articles in the *Cultural Studies Review*:

Aileen Moreton-Robinson, “Critical Indigenous Theory,” *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (September 2009): 12.

Chris Andersen, “From Difference to Density,” *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (September 2009): 80-100.

He states that, in promoting interest in “traditional” relationships with the earth, the tourism industry falls victim to voyeuristic tendencies and chooses to “mystify the crucial political and economic processes” which affect these communities.<sup>135</sup>

Migration, as one of many dynamic social realities, has a profound effect on how we conceive of our identities in relationship with social change.<sup>136</sup> The Q’ero migrants’ move to Cusco threatens their spiritual practices and runs the risk of transforming or fundamentally modifying their sense of identity. However, this spirituality has only grown stronger for the migrants, as they draw on these practices both for continued connection with their previous home in Paucartambo and for their financial well-being. The growing participation of the Q’eros in the tourism industry and the sharing of ancient traditions with Cusqueñan and foreign groups has created heated discussion in the academic community about the “authenticity” of the Q’ero migrants’ beliefs. Doña María, the last altomisayoq of the Q’ero nation, moved to Cusco specifically to work in this industry. And, in coming to the city, many of the migrants have abandoned their agricultural practices to sustain their families through the tourism industry. As such, they now their children and grandchildren to perform the rituals, as their continuation of the family line is essential both for the preservation of their community and culture and for their financial stability. The stability they find in this continuation of ritual and belief actually defies the assumption many scholars make regarding the migration process.<sup>137</sup> Where we might expect to see profound and fundamental change in the lives of those involved, with the Q’eros – as with

---

Jodi A. Byrd, “‘In the city of blinding lights’: Indigeneity, Cultural Studies, and the Errants of Colonial Nostalgia,” *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 13-28.

Sylvia Marcos, “Mesoamerican Women’s Indigenous Spirituality: Decolonizing Religious Beliefs,” *Feminist Studies in Religion* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 25-45.

<sup>135</sup> *South African Keywords: The Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts*, ed. Emile Boonzaier and John Sharp, (Cape Town, South Africa: David Philip Press, 1988. Found in Russell T. McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*, 179.

<sup>136</sup> Andrés de Francisco, *Sociología y cambio social*, (Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, S.A., 1997): 177.

<sup>137</sup> Le Borgne, “Évolution de l’indigénisme dans la société péruvienne.”

the women of Sagrado Corazón – we observe a recommitment to and reinvestment in the practices and values which have defined migrants’ past lives.

Scholars like Norma Fuller,<sup>138</sup> Rubén Pilares Villa,<sup>139</sup> and the various authors of the book *Q’ero, el último ayllu inka* criticize the idea that the Q’eros still truly believe in the spirituality which they practice with the tourists.<sup>140</sup> But this academic discourse assumes a responsibility of the scholar to somehow make a value judgment on the “intention” behind the spiritual practices of a historically marginalized people. But subjected people have, throughout history, revived and reformed their spiritual practices as a method of resistance to imperial rule.<sup>141</sup> The traditions and values embodied within the Andean cosmovisión, for example, have been both re-created by the imperial elite and reclaimed by the Q’eros themselves as a powerful preservation of identity. Although they participate in the tourism industry in part because those in power have chosen to place value in it, those I interviewed also find personal meaning in these practices as a form of reinforcing and reclaiming their indigenous identity. For the Q’eros, indigeneity is not a relic of the past, as both tourists and scholars have characterized it until very recently. Rather, it is a dynamic and constantly negotiated experience of the world.<sup>142</sup> Andean cosmovisión is integral to their sense of identity, and the performance of their rituals holds meaning for them outside the particular financial motivation of the tourist enterprise.

---

<sup>138</sup> Norma Fuller, *Turismo y cultura: entre el entusiasmo y el recelo* (Lima: Fondo Editorial, 2009).

<sup>139</sup> Rubén Pilares Villa, *Turismo místico: parodia o trascendencia*, (Cusco: Impresiones Lezama, S.R.L., 2017).

<sup>140</sup> Fuller, *Turismo y cultura*, 96-108.

Pilares Villa, *Turismo místico*, 59.

David Ugarte Vega Centeno, “Prólogo,” en: *Q’ero, el último ayllu inka: homenaje a Oscar Núñez del Prado y a la expedición científica de la UNSAAC a la nación Q’ero en 1955*, 15.

<sup>141</sup> The third possible relationship between religion and empire he identifies is that religious practices become intricately linked to imperial power, ultimately becoming a tool of imperialism itself. This category is less relevant to the study at hand but is equally interesting to consider in other contexts.

<sup>142</sup> Brooke Larson and Olivia Harris, *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology* (Durham: Duke University, 1995), 340.

These moments of historical engagement with indigenous communities – both colonization and contemporary tourism – depend upon a notion of indigeneity as static.<sup>143</sup> As we consider the use of the term “religion,” I wonder whether a more expansive definition might provide the space both for discussion of the colonial history of Peru and for recognition of the authenticity of indigenous spiritual practices outside their relationship to power. Talal Asad’s foundational work, *Genealogies of Religion*, is particularly poignant for analyzing and understanding indigenous spirituality.<sup>144</sup> It does the important work of making space for marginalized communities in academic discourses by bringing power relations into the academic conversation about religion.

---

<sup>143</sup> Contemporary scholarship within cultural, ethnic, and Native studies challenges these notions and suggests community formation might exist outside the purview of Western colonial notions of nationhood. Much of this scholarship revolves around the idea that the boundaries placed around ethnicities persist despite the fluidity we observe in individual life histories (Barth, 9). Thus, although Andean spiritual leaders like Don Claudio and Doña María travel the world over, encountering many new people and ways of life, their continued performance of the Andean rituals and their ethnic Q’ero identity preserve their connection with their community in Paucartambo. Many contemporary authors have begun to lean into this coexistent individuality and sense of community, refusing to accept the common narrative which simplifies and de-historicizes indigenous experience and identity. *Beyond Imagined Communities*, a collection of essays written in response to Benedict Anderson’s influential text, is a great example of this work. The authors here explore how the “great problem is not how Brazil or Ecuador came to be called nations, but just what *nation* meant to Brazilians and Ecuadorians of diverse social, regional, racial, and cultural descriptions” (xxi). Many of those at the forefront of this post-structuralist approach emphasize Hayden White’s mantra that “the writing of history has always been, and remains, a political act” (*Native Diasporas*, 8). As Jerrold Levy notes, this work departs from the commonly accepted approach which exceptionalizes indigeneity, rather than critically studying it (13). Vicente Diaz explicitly asks his readers to question how modern indigeneity might involve “messy entanglements with nonindigenous peoples, places, ideas, and things” (18).

Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1998): 9.

*Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*, ed. Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2014), 8. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1d9nn07>.

Jerrold E. Levy, *In the Beginning: The Navajo Genesis* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 13.

*Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*, ed. Sara Castro-Karén and John Charles Chasteen (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003), xxi.

Vicente M. Diaz, *Repositioning the Missionary: Rewriting the Histories of Colonialism, Native Catholicism, and Indigeneity in Guam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i, 2010), 18. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqhck>.

<sup>144</sup> It is important to note that Asad remains indecisive about the use of the word “religion” to describe indigenous spiritualities in particular. Rather, his analysis opens up the possibility for further discussion of the colonial history of this term and its usage worldwide.

Asad draws a meaningful distinction between the colonizer's role in *defining*, rather than *creating*, religion for indigenous societies.<sup>145</sup> He states:

It is by means of geographical and psychological movement that modern power inserts itself into pre-existing structures. That process is necessary to defining existing identities and motives as superfluous, and to constructing others in their place. Meanings are thus not only created, they are also redirected or subverted – as so many novels about indigenous life in the colonies have poignantly depicted.<sup>146</sup>

As Asad criticizes the notion of a universal definition of religion, he makes an implicit distinction between that particular definition (and the context from which it originates) and the word itself. He views the Spanish colonizers not as having *brought* “religion” with them, but rather as having *redefined* it for the indigenous population.

Asad and Laine advocate for a more active, social justice-oriented approach to Religious Studies which pays special attention to the discipline's discriminatory history. As Horsley states, “We [scholars] could settle for serving mainly as curators of religious texts and rituals as artifacts left in the wake of imperial power. But we also have something to say to power on behalf of cultural and religious pluralism on the basis of the heritage of the very religious expressions and practices we study.”<sup>147</sup> Although most of the Q'eros I interviewed have adopted aspects of urban life (like its food, clothing, and schedule), the Andean cosmovisión remains central to their experience of the world. Their spiritual practices and values existed prior to the arrival of the Spanish colonizers, and they continue to this day. Although the Q'ero migrants' spirituality has changed since colonization and since their migration to the urban center, and although its nature

---

<sup>145</sup> James Laine similarly distinguishes between religions of “mood” and religions of “mind.” This approach also creates space for both faith- or belief-based traditions like Protestantism and ritual- or practice-based traditions like Andean spirituality to be defined as religions and to be given all the respect that word carries historically. James W. Laine, “Mind and Mood in the Study of Religion,” *Religion* 40 (2010): 239-249.

<sup>146</sup> Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>147</sup> Horsley, “Religion and Other Products of Empire,” 40.

may differ fundamentally from the “religion” defined by white Protestant Europeans, its power and centrality in their lives cannot be understated.

\*\*\*

Even with this reinvestment, however, the Q’eros are faced with difference in the city, which they’ve never experienced in the homogeneity of Paucartambo. The systemic inequalities of Peru’s governmental policies toward indigenous peoples have, in some ways, given implicit license to the Peruvian society to express contempt and prejudice toward the indigenous migrants they meet in the street. At the very least, these policies have taken conversation about difference off the table. My host parents – who are some of the loveliest individuals I’ve ever met, and who welcomed me into their home with open arms – even spouted some of this rhetoric on a daily basis. When their friends came over for dinner, they talked about the “dirty” indigenous people who sold souvenirs in the Plaza, or who crowded the bus stops on their way to work. Don Claudio, one of the first Q’eros to migrate to Cusco, explained that they made the mistake of wearing their Q’ero clothing in the streets in Cusco when they first arrived. In Paucartambo, the community made all their own clothing from llama or alpaca fur. The Cusqueños they met in the street would comment on their “unkhu Q’ero” (Q’ero ponchos), seemingly repulsed by their presence. When the urban community began to express more outward animosity toward the Q’eros’ continued presence, the migrants began wearing urban clothes to draw less attention to themselves and avoid such comments. Encounters like these reveal the continued marginalization and inequality they experience in the city. They are not uncommon, either – all those I interviewed described circumstances in which their indigenous identities spurred animosity and acts of disgust. And yet, my interviewees insisted that much of the Cusqueñan society welcomes the Q’eros and values their

presence. However, the Q'eros remain optimistic and choose to focus on the people who appreciate their offerings to the Pachamama and who have welcomed them to the city.

For the Q'eros, who value reciprocity above all else – who value being in relationship with one another and with the earth above all else – these divisions take an extreme emotional toll. Don Agustín in particular described how this bias breaks down the Q'ero community's ancient values. For the Q'eros, Ayni (reciprocity) is the most central value within their cosmovisión. It builds support, mutual respect, and community among them and across difference. In Paucartambo, Ayni permeates every aspect of their lives. As they build homes with each other, eat meals together, and harvest crops for one another, they build a sense of solidarity. This value continues to define the daily actions and small exchanges among the Q'eros who have migrated to Cusco. But, in Don Agustín's view, the city as a whole does not share this value with the Q'eros. It does not take the time to appreciate the growth of the crops which sustain them, or the Pachamama which has brought them energy, or the legs upon which they walk. In his view, every aspect of life in Cusco revolves around independent financial gain and individuality. It is more competitive, rather than reciprocal. And this myth of their individualism absolutely masks the ways in which they are all connected to one another through their existence on this earth.

Don Agustín's personal emotional experience with this transition reflects a broader phenomenon of indigenous identity over the last 50 years. As the many cultural groups and geographic areas of Peru have come to interact with one another, indigenous identity has become inherently more complex. Cities, traditionally perceived as criolla or mestiza, have seen an influx of indigenous communities.<sup>148</sup> With this migration, a demographic and ideological transition has also occurred. The mestizos, once despised by the white elite, gained positions of local power and

---

<sup>148</sup> Cecilie Vindal Odegaard, *Mobility, Markets and Indigenous Socialities: Contemporary Migration in the Peruvian Andes*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2010: 40.

began to mediate between the white and indigenous populations.”<sup>149</sup> But the city as a concept differs dramatically from the city in actuality. Mestizos in positions of power have largely adopted attitudes typically associated with prestige and power, assuming their hierarchical position above indigenous migrants.<sup>150</sup> While the indigenous population has a particularly visceral experience of this discrepancy in political rhetoric versus political reality, the urban society often denies it. Over time, this paradox between perception and reality has only perpetuated the long history of inequality and marginalization of the indigenous communities in Peru.

Within this context, the Q’ero migrants have a newfound need to redefine their identity and subvert the prejudices and biases of their new societal surroundings. Among Intic Churincuna, we find spiritual practices which blend indigenous and mestizo identities more than many political and scholarly actors might prefer. Hill describes the spiritual and religious practices of this community as “a vibrant example of mestizaje in theory and practice.”<sup>151</sup> He conceives of mestizo identity as both pure and hybrid at the same time, asserting that mestizo communities freely mix traditional and modern elements of various cultures into their identities. Instead of “indian” or “mestizo,” they choose to identify as “Andean.”

This discussion of indigenous peoples’ negotiation of identity is not necessarily unique to spiritual practice.<sup>152</sup> The Q’eros negotiate their identities through their choice of clothing, their

---

<sup>149</sup> Fiona Wilson, “Indians and *Mestizos*: Identity and Urban Popular Culture in Andean Peru,” *Southern African Studies* 26, no. 2 (June 2000): 252.

<sup>150</sup> Wilson, “Indians and *Mestizos*,” 252.

<sup>151</sup> Hill, “Myth, Globalization, and Mestizaje,” 265.

<sup>152</sup> Holly Wissler, whose doctoral dissertation explored the musical practices of the Q’eros, describes how “musical choices permit them [the Q’eros] flexibility of identity ... between that of their native community, and that of the urban world, or the mestizos.” The Q’ero nation creates “a continuous practice of musical expressions which reinforce and recreate that worldview.” According to Wissler, the changes the Q’eros experience when they participate in the tourist activities of festivals like Qoyllurit’i has a large impact on the sense of identity they express through music.

Holly Wissler, “Q’eros, Perú: la regeneración de relaciones cosmológicas e identidades específicas a través de la música,” *Anthropologica* 28 (diciembre 2010): 97.



food, and the language they speak, as well as the societal prestige associated with occupation and level of education.<sup>153</sup> Holly Wissler explains that the term “mestizo” signifies a particular level of wealth, abundance, and status:

The term ‘misti’ or ‘mestizo’ for the Q’eros, and for other Andean people, alludes to those who have a style of life considerably different than theirs and is associated with the urban world and has attributes like education, daily use of Spanish rather than Quechua, clothing made in factories and work in the monetary economy. In other words, the Q’eros have adopted a new dance and an instrument like a mode for successfully integrating themselves and of identifying themselves with the many pilgrims who participate in Qoyllurit’i.<sup>154</sup>

Depending upon the message they wish to present to the rest of the world, the Q’eros may choose to identify themselves with either the rural community or the urban one – with either the mestizo population or the indigenous one.<sup>155</sup> This negotiation of identity does not only serve to reinforce indigenous identity, but also affects society’s perception of the Q’eros.

There are benefits which come with identifying oneself not only as “mestizo,” but also as “urban.” In their migration, the Q’eros bring themselves back and forth from the brink of assimilating into urban society. For them, “this simultaneous localizing and distancing operates to transcend conventional Western notions of time and space and, by extension, notions of urban and nonurban as relevant categories in the construction of [indigeneity].”<sup>156</sup> As such, the identity others perceive when they come into contact with the Q’eros, in some ways, is actually rooted within the indigenous peoples’ choices – to migrate, wear urban clothing, and speak Spanish, among other factors. They explain, “The city has assumed increasing importance as a source of

---

<sup>153</sup> Larson and Harris, *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes*, 340.

<sup>154</sup> Wissler, “La regeneración de relaciones cosmológicas,” 111.

<sup>155</sup> Wissler, “La regeneración de relaciones cosmológicas,” 97.

<sup>156</sup> Donna Patrick and Gabriele Budach, “Urban-Rural” Dynamics and Indigenous Urbanization: The Case of Inuit Language Use in Ottawa,” *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 13:4 (2014): 251.

economic power and political prestige. Urban work is valued more highly than rural work.”<sup>157</sup> They continue, “Whereas landownership once defined ‘mestizos’ and ‘whites’ as such, now urban residence, employment, or lifestyle determine who [is] ‘non-Indian.’”<sup>158</sup> Urban society and the Peruvian population as a whole draw heavily on these kinds of identity markers, which ultimately dictate how the indigenous community chooses to present and identify itself.<sup>159</sup> Rather than present themselves as indigenous or mestizo, the Q’eros have begun to embrace their indigenous identity while also highlighting their urban one. In this negotiation of identity, they mediate power dynamics and contend with the value judgments placed upon “ancient” and “modern” ways of being in the world. These identities are not concrete in Peru; rather, they are fluid and constantly changing.

As a result of this fluidity, sometimes “people seem to internalize the stigma and negativity associated with the Andean by under-communicating their background, whilst on other occasions they celebrate their Andean background as positive in contrast to the urban or mestizo way of life.”<sup>160</sup> Wissler describes:

Although many no longer use the complete Q’ero outfit in their daily lives, they do wear it when they have the opportunity to make money, taking advantage of (in the good sense) the use of their Q’ero identity. The Peruvian ethnomusicologist Raúl Romero refers to this process of changing contextual identity as “mobile identity.”<sup>161</sup>

This concept of mobile identity is not new among the Q’eros. Their integration of Catholic and Andean beliefs and practices, now accepted by Peruvian society, “allows urban Andean mestizos to ground their identities in indigeneity simultaneously as to position themselves relative to

---

<sup>157</sup> Brooke Larson and Olivia Harris, *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology*, Durham: Duke University, 1995: 334.

<sup>158</sup> Larson and Harris, *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes*, 339.

<sup>159</sup> Larson and Harris, *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes*, 339.

<sup>160</sup> Patrick and Budach, “Urban-Rural’ Dynamics and Indigenous Urbanization,” 204.

<sup>161</sup> Wissler, “La regeneración de relaciones cosmológicas,” 111.

contemporary contexts of globalization.”<sup>162</sup> In a similar way, their participation in the tourist industry allows them to participate in a financial and societal system which would otherwise exclude them. As they adapt to participate in the systems imposed on them from above, however, they continue to find meaning and value in their indigenous identity. They do not aspire to abandon their indigenous identities and communities for those of the “mestizo;” rather, they hope to stay true to their Q’ero identities while also overturning the systemic prejudices and biases which constrain them.<sup>163</sup>

\*\*\*

My first day of fieldwork, as I got out of the taxi at the top of Alto Cusco, Víctor and his wife explained to Mirtha that they had traveled to help construct the roof of a fellow Q’ero house. Although I didn’t know it at the time, this moment would come to shape many of my thoughts on the Q’ero migrants. Even as they live apart from each other, sprawled out on the edges of the city, the Q’eros prioritize these gestures of reciprocity, of relationship-building, and of community. Mirtha and I could hear and watch the Q’ero men construct the roof from above, as we walked the dirt paths of Ununchis. At 9:00 in the morning, what seemed like most of the community had come together to support a single family. And while I had been told in my classes that Ayni was the central value in Andean cosmovisión, seeing it in action changed my entire understanding of who the Q’eros are and what they hold dear. For the Q’eros, this project was not only a construction job, but also an opportunity to reunite the community and be with one another in a time of abundance. Their spirituality absolutely defines their sense of identity, even outside the context of Paucartambo, where life is intricately tied to the Pachamama. Their migration has forced the Q’eros to invest more deeply in the traditions and rituals which connect them to the

---

<sup>162</sup> Hill, “Myth, Globalization, and Mestizaje,” 263.

<sup>163</sup> Diana Steele, “Higher Education and Urban Migration,” 101.

Pachamama and the Apus – but their values remain nearly unscathed. When Boillat and Berkes<sup>164</sup> examine Andean campesinos' relationship with the earth, concerned about the effects of climate change, they predict that these changes weaken the relationship with the Pachamama. But for the Q'eros, the urgency of the situation is ever more apparent. They owe everything to Mother Earth, and their relationship with her becomes even more central as they care for her as best they can.

Ayni manifested itself quietly but surely numerous times during my discussions with the Q'eros. But its centrality, amidst both difficult situations and celebratory ones, truly crystallized when I interviewed Doña María. She had not been home when Mirtha and I first visited the community, and we had to return the following week to talk with her. When we arrived at her home, she and her granddaughter welcomed us in and invited us to sit. In the open-air space outside their kitchen, Doña María explained the community's recent loss of a beloved elderly woman. Many families now living in Cusco had traveled to Paucartambo to attend the ceremony for that woman and her family, and Doña María had performed the final rituals of the woman's life in communication with the Apus. Their understanding of community derives from Ayni – from the belief that all are in relationship with all. As everything around them (people, animals, plants, and the ground beneath their feet) has a spirit, everything also deserves respect. These values truly define what it means to be Q'ero. As a result, when I asked whether they identify with the urban community, all the interviewees conveyed a complete dedication to their identities as “Q'ero,” rather than “Cusqueñan” or “Peruvian.”

For the migrants, these traditions and values have clear connections with their ancestors and the lineage of their community as distinct from the rest of Peruvian society. Víctor told me that all his ancestors – his father, his grandfather, his great-grandfather – have been pampamisayoq.

---

<sup>164</sup> Boillat and Berkes, “Perception and Interpretation of Climate Change,” 21.

For him, to continue the offerings is to carry that heritage and those values into the future, even against the changing backdrop of their migration to Cusco. Don Nicolás, Don Claudio, and Don Agustín expressed similar feelings. Víctor explained that the despacho is the vestige of the Incan culture, and Don Agustín even adopted the trope of the 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologist, describing the Q'eros as the descendants of the Incas. Doña María simply explained, “I do as my parents taught me.” They convey, quite clearly, a sense of responsibility in maintaining their traditions and teaching them to their children. Their responsibility is not only to continue the offerings, but also to continue their history – they are writing it in their daily actions, in the continued performance of their ritual duties. Their continued belief in the power of the Earth, in their own lives and in those of their descendants, drives their commitment each and every day.

Even as they are called to move away from their homes, the Q'eros carry the Apus with them. Doña María and two of the pampamisayoq have traveled to other countries in South America, North America, and Europe to perform rituals for other faith groups. They told me that, if you live in the Q'ero countryside in or near Paucartambo, you call the Apus there. If you move or travel to the United States, you call upon the Apus near you in that new location. With the ability to connect with Apus around the world, they have the opportunity to maintain their spiritual connection to the Earth – a central part of their Q'ero identity – even in the midst of moving in and through new locations. They continue to offer despachos for the Pachamama as the principal way of resolving problems and helping the family, and as a result, the essence of their reciprocal relationship with the Earth remains.

In reaffirming their spiritual practices, the migrants have maintained their dedication to the Andean calendar, marking seasons of life by the earth. Many of the migrants return to their homes for the festivities of the month of the earth (in August) and Carnaval (in January or February) to

celebrate with their community in Paucartambo. The continuation of these traditions disjoins them from Cusco and invites them back to the revolution of the earth. These celebrations, in their integration of the Q'ero clothing, food, and language, reaffirm the Andean community, rituals, and values from which the offerings come. In these trips back to the countryside, the migrants reconnect with their land and their people, reinforcing their identities as members of the Q'ero nation. This creation of ritual space and ritual time brings the simple repetition of practice into a spiritual realm, such that the practice itself actually allows a deeper meaning to reveal itself.<sup>165</sup> The space to connect more fully with the Andean rituals in Paucartambo – in the ancestral land itself – reinforces the sacredness of this community, this land, these rituals, and these values for the migrants. These trips reaffirm their connection to the Q'ero culture even as they adopt aspects of urban life. They wear their traditional clothing and speak the Quechua language, weaving them more intricately into the tapestry of the Q'ero community.

\*\*\*

As my time with the Q'eros came to a close, I asked each of them whether they feel like part of the Cusqueñan society. At this question, each and every one told me that the connection they feel to their community remains integral to who they are. In the face of inequality and marginalization, they have created a community organization to represent the Q'ero migrants to the Cusqueñan government. But in its formation, this organization also implicitly preserves the Q'eros migrants' sense of community and identity as different from the rest of the city. It allows

---

<sup>165</sup> Catherine Bell states, "If ritual is interpreted in terms of practice, it becomes clear that formality, fixity, and repetition are not intrinsic qualities of ritual so much as they are a frequent, but not universal strategy for producing ritualized acts. That is to say, formalizing a gathering, following a fixed agenda and repeating that activity at periodic intervals, and so on, reveal potential strategies of ritualization because these ways of acting are the means by which one group of activities is set off as distinct and privileged vis-a-vis other activities." The repetition of the offerings for the Pachamama and the ritual callings of the Apus, both in Paucartambo and in Cusco, create an experience of the sacred which is inextricable from the Q'ero community itself.

Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 92.

them to periodically enter a distinctly Q'ero space, even away from the land of their ancestral community, and to take pride in that identity. And the financial opportunity of the tourism industry has given them a sense of stability in the city, helping them cope with the emotional trauma of living away from their community.

The Q'ero migrants' experience echoes the transition from "mood" to "mind" I described in the previous chapter. Where Andean cosmovisión – in its practices, values, and community – was once the air the Q'eros breathed, in their migration they have had to find a new source for commitment. They must actively seek out and re-commit to their traditions. And, at least for the time being, they have done so. The performance of these rituals mediates the migrants' separation from Paucartambo by reconnecting them with the ritual aspects of that land and that community. Their Andean cosmovisión is the keystone to preserving Q'ero identity and community in the midst of a new and challenging environment. The offering, in all its complexity, is simple to the Q'eros. It is a choreography mutually understood by all those in the community – and in its performance, the migrants re-create the sacred space in which they are Q'ero above all else.

\*\*\*

In considering the role of the anthropologist in studying migrants like the Q'eros, or Roberto, his own student, Michael Jackson posits that "The refugee and the migrant remind us that when people are 'unprotected by any specific law or political convention,' they are '*nothing but human beings*.'"<sup>166</sup> The Q'eros, facing extreme hardship and difficulty, find strength in their spirituality, in their common humanity and life experiences as Q'eros. When I close my eyes and picture Don Claudio, for example, I see a living embodiment of perseverance, amidst the difficulty of his life and the beauty of his community around him. The integration of both individuality and

---

<sup>166</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 199.

commonality among the Q'eros directly challenges the dominant histories which would choose to gloss and universalize *both* indigeneity *and* Catholicism. Neither of these identities, which the Q'eros hold dear, remain unchanging categories or linear trajectories through life toward some clearly determined end.

Orsi offers an alternative concept, which he terms “braiding,” and which he proposes might bring more empathy and truth into the scholarly study of religion:

Braiding means that the linear narratives so beloved of modernity – from immigration to assimilation, from premodern to modern, from a simple faith to a more sophisticated faith and so on – are not simply wrong but that they mask the sources of history’s dynamics, culture’s pain, and the possibilities for innovation and change. Braiding alerts us to look for improbable intersections, incommensurable ways of living, discrepant imaginings, unexpected movements of influence, and inspiration existing side by side – within families and neighborhoods, as well as psychological, spiritual, and intellectual knots within the same minds and hearts.<sup>167</sup>

What we mean when we use the term “religion” shifts by context, and different people deploy this term to achieve a variety of ends. Spanish colonizing Catholics did so to criticize these practices as superstitious or uncivilized. The tourism industry does so to attract “spiritual, but not religious” Americans. In both cases, indigenous people have been dealt a bad hand. But we do have the power to upend the systems which have defined indigeneity as “backward,” “traditional,” “unchanging,” and so on. We do have the power to dig deeper into the innovation of the Q'eros, and into the ways they change and the ways they remain steadfast. We have the power to identify inspiration in the everyday rituals through which the Q'eros honor all beings. We have the power to valorize *that* experience of the sacred.

---

<sup>167</sup> Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 9.



Ultimately, whether these beliefs and practices are to be considered a “religion” will be for the Q’eros themselves to decide. But whether or not we view them as such, we have a responsibility to recognize their centrality in the lives of the Q’eros themselves, and we must consider the possibility that reclaiming this fraught terminology may be powerful for them as well. In their migration, the Q’eros weave their stories into the tapestry of what it means to be Q’ero. They reproduce and reclaim what it means to be indigenous.<sup>168</sup> In the midst of strife, they find strength in the quietest of moments – those experienced in the construction of a roof, a shared meal, or over a pile of coca leaves during an offering to the Pachamama. Their cosmovisión, which they embody so beautifully and so fully, sustains them as individuals and as a community. We cannot predict the future, but I expect it will continue to do so in the coming years. When we do the work of recognizing refugees and migrants as full human beings, even when society may tell us otherwise, “this challenge implies an ethics before ethics, whose quintessential expression is love.”<sup>169</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> Velasco Ortiz and París Pombo, “Indigenous Migration,” 10.

<sup>169</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 199.

#### IV. POSTSCRIPT: BY GUESS AND BY GOD

My approach to this project has been directly affected by my own frustration with the purportedly “objective” nature of scholarship. Orsi states, “The modern world has assiduously and systematically disciplined the senses not to experience sacred presence; the imaginations of moderns are trained toward sacred absence.”<sup>170</sup> Further:

The postulate of absence, along with the totalizing claims of discourse, makes it difficult to work from inside the experience of those who have encountered sacred presences outward toward the environment within which these experiences have their destiny, rather than the other way around. It is nearly impossible to let such experiences be as they are to those involved in them without yielding to the imperative to explain them (away). Any account of religious phenomena as social constructions runs the risk of distorting and diminishing these phenomena precisely *as* historical and cultural realities, because such phenomena are not merely this.<sup>171</sup>

The academic institution – a product of the rupture of the Protestant Revolution and the privileging of intellectualism – has been designed in opposition to the modalities of non-Protestant religion.<sup>172</sup>

These values became widely accepted as the “correct” ones through a negotiation which took place in a particular time and among a particular people. As a result, the institution has come to privilege those practices and systems of belief which align with that conclusion, at which we arrived so long ago.

Multiple scholars have voiced this same frustration with the academic institution in recent years, not only citing the valorization of a particular kind of religious experience, but also of a particular kind of scholarship. When we approach non-Western, non-Protestant, non-intellectual

---

<sup>170</sup> Robert A. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 12.

<sup>171</sup> Robert A. Orsi, *History and Presence* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2016), 62.

<sup>172</sup> Multiple Religious Studies scholars have published thoughtful and influential articles and books on this topic. In particular, I recommend the work of Robert Orsi and Nancy Levene, both of whom interrogate the origins of this institution without throwing it out as no longer relevant. In addition the *Anthropology of Catholicism* anthology discusses this topic more specifically in relationship to the study of Latin American religions and indigenous spirituality.

traditions (like those I describe in this essay) with an immediate assumption of inauthenticity, we fail to fully interpret those experiences of the world which are different:

The Protestant-normative, Reformationist, Western, and utterly ‘American’ ethos of religious studies, with the invisible mysterium over the material tremendum, its reverence for the interior and disdain for the exterior – these have hindered the development of a theoretical apparatus capable of approximating and interpreting the complex role of living matter in diverse religious practices.<sup>173</sup>

But the effects of this failure do not confine themselves to the walls of the academy. Instead, they flow into the subconscious of Western societies like that of the U.S. – into their politics, their rhetoric, and their actions. As I prepare to leave the undergraduate institution, I am convinced that scholarly study does not necessitate criticism and immediate disavowal of belief. Religion and spirituality *can* exist and *do* exist as they are described by religious individuals themselves.<sup>174</sup> Refusing to accept the authenticity of that experience perpetuates the existence of an implicit hierarchical relationship between the scholar and the religious community. Religious and spiritual experiences and identities are wide, incorporating a vast diversity of experiences and livelihoods. At the very least, religion exists as it appears to those who practice it – and if it doesn’t, they will often admit that gap between belief and reality. Even as scholarship may necessarily be critical in nature, not all scholarship must necessarily be criticizing. As scholars, we have the privilege and responsibility to study and analyze the stories of those we encounter while also honoring the authenticity of those experiences. Not all scholarship must begin and end with disbelief – we are allowed to choose respect.

---

<sup>173</sup> J. Michelle Molina, “Making a Home in an Unfortunate Place: Phenomenology and Religion,” in *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*, edited by Kristin Norget, Valentine Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 258.

<sup>174</sup> This whole-hearted belief in one’s religious tradition can, of course, lead to negative actions in the public sphere. I argue, however, that meeting others’ experiences with an open mind can do more good than simply writing this experience off as misinformed or superstitious.

Clifford Geertz, despite his fraught understanding of religion and its “truth,” offered this insight into *why* and *how* we should study religion: “Religion is sociologically interesting not because, as vulgar positivism would have it, it describes the social order ... but because, like environment, political power, wealth, jural obligation, personal affection, and a sense of beauty, it shapes it.”<sup>175</sup> Despite many scholars’ assumption that all religions share some fundamental belief or value or practice, the breadth of societies we can observe actually reveal a beautiful and valuable diversity. Although I have included my own analysis of these migrants’ religious experiences, the stories of these migrants stand on their own. As Michael Jackson has stated, our understanding of others’ experiences and beliefs “can *only* proceed from within our own experience, and this experience involves our personalities and histories as much as our fieldwork.”<sup>176</sup> It may be time, however, to reconsider the implications of clinging to a tradition so long held. Even if we reinforce this same belief in the academy, we may reveal a more thoughtful conclusion as to its worth. Why do we believe what we believe?

\*\*\*

It is not that the migrants I interviewed have clung, unquestioningly, onto the traditions of their past. The movement of these communities across borders and into new and challenging spaces *has* fundamentally changed their experience of the rituals and practices to which they devote themselves. Catherine Bell states, “Complicity, struggle, negotiation – these terms all aim to rethink ideology as a lived and practical consciousness, as a partial and oppositional process actively constructed by all involved and taking place in the very organization of everyday life.”<sup>177</sup> In the struggle of migration, the individuals who perform these rituals in their everyday lives have

---

<sup>175</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 119.

<sup>176</sup> Michael Jackson, *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1989.

<sup>177</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 191.

taken on a new challenge to decide what, when, where, how, and why they do what they do. In effect, they are in the process of deciding who they are in the context of the systemic and structural ideologies which surround them. The choice to continue their rituals, especially within the constant change of migration, does not come easily. But they have not stopped and taken on an entirely different religion; rather, they have chosen to remain rooted in the practices and choreographies which have become natural to them over many years. They have retreated into the comfort of their traditions, which have given them the opportunity to reconsider and redefine why what they believe is important. In the midst of extreme change and discomfort, ritual practices have become powerful in their universality and elasticity – in their ability to remain constant across the borders of change. These practices bring the migrants back into their identities, creating them in all their individuality once again.

Bell states, “The redemptive hegemony of practice does not reflect reality more or less effectively; it creates it more or less effectively.”<sup>178</sup> Who we are is *created* – not reflected – in what we do and how we do it. These migrants create for themselves a new, more empathetic, and more bearable version of reality which allows them to build community and remain committed to their spirituality, rather than accepting the version of reality espoused by the dominant society around them. Bell’s ideas here reflect those of Clifford Geertz, who posits that “the social structure of a group is strengthened and perpetuated through the ritualistic or mythic symbolization of the underlying social values upon which it rests.”<sup>179</sup> At Sagrado Corazón, the Catholic migrant women re-establish and reinforce their commitment to the Eucharist, which symbolizes the centrality of shared community and mutuality with the Lord. In Cusco, the migrant Q’eros re-create the offering to the Pachamama over and against the new backdrop of the tourism industry,

---

<sup>178</sup> Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 85.

<sup>179</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 142.

emphasizing their belief in the power of reciprocity with each other and with the earth. The ritual practices in which these migrant communities have become skilled prior to their migration across borders become the very foundation for continuing to thrive and build community, even as they struggle with the realities of living in unfamiliar territories. Both groups draw upon their ritual practice to reinforce the values of community and reciprocity which have defined their identities for years. But their migration provides the initial opportunity to reflect upon their beliefs, and to choose what will be meaningful to them in the future.

\*\*\*

When I began this journey in the spring of 2018, I had no idea that this work would come to mean what it does to me today. I hoped that my work with the Sagrado Corazón community would begin to develop my academic research skills and independence. And yet, I found myself speechless toward the end of my first interview, only able to say, “You have had a beautiful life, and your strength is astounding. I am so glad you’ve found this community.” From that moment on, I set out with empathy for those I interviewed, an interest in their stories, and the hope of making genuine connections with them. Most importantly, I began to believe that I would achieve more scholarly depth by building relationships with those I interviewed – by listening and genuinely connecting with them.

I finished that first summer of research with what felt like much *less* of an understanding of religion than I ever had before. Although my ideas had been challenged numerous times in the course of studying religion at Macalester, listening to the women’s stories was a profound responsibility which flipped my understanding of scholarship upside down. The stories, and the trust the women placed in me, quieted my anxious mind. My approach shifted, and I began to accept these personal narratives as worthy of deep respect, even without an academic argument to

accompany them. When I left for Peru that August, I did not know that I would ultimately conduct independent research with the Q'eros, that I would become passionate about indigenous rights both in that country and in this one, or that I would eventually find deep meaning in the connections between the lives of Mexican Catholics and indigenous Peruvians. Moving to Cusco and coming to know a new city myself suddenly made the meaning of my work in Minneapolis clearer to me: the stories of migrants are marked by much, much more than the simple statistics and demographics we often hear on the news. Each and every migrant, (and their child and their grandchild), has a personal history and a story worthy of being told on its own. This essay, as a result, has been shaped not only by academic goals, but also by the hope to share even a bit of the breadth and abundance of the lives and stories I have encountered in the last two years.

Gloria Anzaldúa's anthology *This Bridge We Call Home* echoes these migrants' constant struggle to define their lives and identities without the input of those who wish to otherize them by highlighting the work of migrants themselves. In this anthology, Anzaldúa highlights the words of Evelyn Alsultany, a scholar of contemporary Arab and Muslim politics and a migrant woman herself. She states, "the frameworks used to (mis)read my body, to disconnect me, wear on me. I try to develop a new identity. What should I try to pass for next time? ... Ethnicity needs to be recast so that our moving selves can be acknowledged."<sup>180</sup> Like Hannah Arendt, Alsultany critiques the model of migration, citizenship, and belonging which places the acceptance of the other at the end of a linear (and unrealistic) path. This version of the migration story seeks to emphasize the borders and boundaries between countries, rather than the humanity of those who cross them. The legal gymnastics of migration and citizenship undermine the very rights claimed by our global legal system to be "inalienable." In the social identities of "undocumented migrant,"

---

<sup>180</sup> Evelyn Alsultany, "Los Intersticios: Recasting Moving Selves," in *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, ed. Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, (Routledge: New York, 2002): 107.

“resident alien,” “ethnic minority,” or “wretched of the earth,” individuals and entire populations live inside the world’s borders and between states of belonging and exclusion.<sup>181</sup> This tension “implies an unresolved relationship between one’s natural identity as a human being and one’s social identit[ies].”<sup>182</sup> Often, the stories of the human beings actually experiencing such change get lost in the administrative and demographic discourse of the global North, which uses these social labels to mask their bare humanity.<sup>183</sup> Ultimately, these discourses gloss over the everyday practices, hardships, and devotion of migrants which bind them together with the non-migrant population as human beings. I hope that this essay will contribute to the narrative which places these migrants back at the center of their own stories.

But the stories I tell here not only represent the movement of populations toward cities and toward the North (phenomena which have characterized human migration for generations now). They also epitomize an experience of the sacred which has largely been overlooked in the academic study of religion. Orsi describes this experience of movement as bringing the migrant into a space *between* heaven and earth, between the living and the dead, between the past, the present, and the future.<sup>184</sup> He states:

In the unlocked environment of the devotional relationship there develops ‘a separate sense that reaches through the barriers exercised by the limits of consciousness.’ Much becomes possible that otherwise was not. Time may become fluid. Past / present / future, as they are, as they are hoped for, and as they are dreaded, may converge. Spatial boundaries, between here and there, oneself and another, may give way. Relationships also come under the power of the unlocked imagination, relationships between heaven and earth, between the living and the dead, among persons as they are and persons as they are desired to be by

---

<sup>181</sup> Michael Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 223.

<sup>182</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 223.

<sup>183</sup> This language is deeply influenced by the work of Giorgio Agamben, who pioneered the concept of bare life. He theorized that, in much contemporary literature, politics, and scholarship, human life as sheer biological fact is given privilege over human life as it is lived day to day. His foundation work, *Homo Sacer*, is a complex but insightful resource into this theory.

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>184</sup> Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 67.



themselves and others. In the abundant event and all that follows it, a certain kind of intersubjective receptivity and recognition may become possible, on earth and between heaven and earth, an awareness of being seen and known, of seeing and knowing, so focused that in certain circumstances it may seem intrusive and threatening; in others, deeply compassionate and supportive.<sup>185</sup>

In relying upon spiritual practice to sustain them in the midst of migration, these migrants open up the possibility for further and deeper interaction with the sacred. These moments of existential change and transition, in their hardship and their pain, give way to the kind of spiritual experience many of those living in the global North seek. For Jackson, the borderland and the particular experience of migration represents a reality more transcendent and all-encompassing. He describes the borderland as a space where “migrants find themselves at the limits of what they can endure, border patrol agents are stretched beyond the limits of what they can control, and intellectuals find that orthodox ways of describing and analyzing the world do not do justice to the experiences involved.”<sup>186</sup>

In their impulse toward rationalization, human beings ultimately essentialize all human experiences by seeking answers. In their fear of the unknown, they choose not to recognize their complexity. But this complexity is the space from which true scholarship and true understanding reveal themselves. These migrants find themselves torn between languages, between homes, and between the past and the future. In this change, their past lives no longer fulfill the same needs they once did. But that tension is the change which defines us. The identities we use to describe these human beings – migrant, Q’ero, Mexican, woman, indigenous, and so on – have been created to help individuals convey their experience of life to those others who can never fully understand it.<sup>187</sup> And so it is with all of us. We all attempt to describe our experience of life to those around

---

<sup>185</sup> Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*, 67.

<sup>186</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 124.

<sup>187</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 124.

us, even if they will never understand completely. We all want to be part of a community and to be in relationship with one another. But often, when we identify difference, we undermine the abundance that recognition and appreciation of difference might bring about.

For migrants themselves, the experience of crossing borders, and the difficult reflection necessary to reconcile the changes which mark that migration, become characterizing aspects of daily life. Jackson states:

I consider it imperative that we complement this view of a stable self with descriptions of human improvisation, experimentation, opportunism, and existential mobility, showing that individuals often struggle less with aligning their lives with given moral or legal norms than with finding ways of negotiating *the ethical space* between external constraints and personal imperatives. This capacity for strategic shape-shifting, both imaginative and actual, defines our very humanity.<sup>188</sup>

Migrants experience a more dramatic and condensed version of a change we all face in our lives. Treating this experience as unusual fails to recognize our commonality and the nature of human life. In a world which has emphasized our differences for so long, the stories of these migrants are an appeal to our common humanity. Jackson states, “Rather than treat the migrant as a singular figure – an interloper, anomaly, or alien in our midst – I view the migrant as exemplifying a universal aspect of human existence. Either we are moving or the world is moving – about, under, or above us.”<sup>189</sup> Even as they face new challenges on a daily basis, many migrants choose to accept both the challenge and the beauty which come with that transition. Moving forward, I hope the academy might foreground the stories of these migrants, who not only demonstrate resilience in the face of difficulty, but who reclaim what it means to migrate by carrying their borders with them. In so doing, they develop and re-develop identities and values which they had long held without such reflection.

---

<sup>188</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 202.

<sup>189</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 3.

We must not get lost in the romanticism of this narrative. These migrants have been forced “to accept events as they transpired, in all their complexity, pain, and contradiction. Their stories are not stories of heroic triumph; they are chronicles of separation and loss. As such, they are expressions of ‘the work of mourning, understood as the acceptance of the irreparable.’”<sup>190</sup> The task continues, day in and day out, to find ourselves in the mire of all that has been and all that will be. In failing to lean into the discomfort and the misunderstanding, we leave untouched the possibility for empathy and, more importantly, our own self-discovery. Alsultany suggests that, “if we change the reading / framework / lens, we can transform dislocation into location. We must reconstruct ‘belonging’ to embrace the experiences of all human beings.”<sup>191</sup>

We are all forced to live in the present each and every day, within and without, only truly able to understand our stories as they exist in this moment. Change and transition are the only constants of this life. They become the stories we tell as markers along our lives’ journeys. But that instability, even in its constancy, scares us. And this uncertainty might possibly be the root of our devotion and of our faith, no matter where we put it. The boundaries of our lives – the differences between right and wrong, moral and immoral, friend and foe, the sacred and the profane – become blurred, and life forces us to hold onto the only constants we do have. We run toward those religious, spiritual, or relational experiences which mark our lives with meaning in the midst of uncertainty, and we place our faith in them. Life forces us, in the best of times and in the worst of times, to have wonder and humility for the miracle that is our humanity. We might all learn something valuable from observing the resilience of migrant communities which find their strength in the belief, the ritual, and the community of their faith traditions. As they continue to weave the tapestry of their lives, of their identities, and of their humanity, they come to know what it means

---

<sup>190</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 225.

<sup>191</sup> Alsultany, “Los Intersticios,” 109.

to be human. For them, as for all of us, “Life is an improvisation, and one moves through it by trial and error, by guess and by God.”<sup>192</sup> We must all recommit ourselves to digging deeper into ourselves, to finding the truth of what it means to practice humility and to find wonder in the midst of change and difference.

---

<sup>192</sup> Jackson, *The Wherewithal of Life*, 225.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the migrants whose life experiences have formed this project, I owe eternal gratitude. This project principally aims to honor your personal narratives and to show the beauty of the embodiment of your spirituality. To the community of Sagrado Corazón de Jesús Catholic Church, thank you for welcoming me with open arms into your parish and your experience of the Catholic tradition. Your passion for and commitment to the Catholic faith has inspired me in so many ways, and your creation of such a sacred space and community has clarified the meaning of the global Church for me. Specifically, I would like to show my sincere thanks for the time I shared with Martha, Gloria, Maricela, María Isabel, Cecilia, Karina, and Julieta. To the Q'ero migrants of San Sebastián, I must express my deepest gratitude for sharing the beauty of your tradition, which is so different from my own. Thank you for inviting me to hold your life experiences and personal narratives with reverence. Your belief in the power of this world has allowed me to see this earth come alive once again, and for that I am forever grateful. To la Señora Victoria, Don Víctor Machaca, Don Agustín, Don Claudio, Don Nicolás, and Doña María – thank you for bringing this earth to life.

To all the Chaplains at the Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, thank you for standing by me as I have defined and redefined my ideas of embodied spirituality and the importance of religious and spiritual practice in the existential experience of all human beings. Your guidance and thought-provoking conversation have continually challenged and guided me through this entire process, and your commitment to intellectual interaction with the religions you practice has been a guiding force in my hope to conduct rigorous academic scholarship that also has heart. To the many scholars who advised me in this long process, especially Mirtha Irco, Alex Álvarez, Erik Davis, and James von Geldern, thank you for carving time out of your schedules to sit and talk, allow me to grow frustrated and then fall in love with this scholarship once again. Your leadership, guidance, and dedication to rigorous academic work has inspired me in these fledgling stages of my academic career.

To Calvin Roetzel and his family, thank you for supporting this work – without your financial support, I would still be standing behind the bar of a country club in Iowa. Your commitment to undergraduate research has created academic opportunities I never expected, and I could not have spent time conducting any of this research over the course of the last two years without your help. To Father Kevin McDonough and Sister Margaret McGuirk of Sagrado Corazón, your assistance in connecting me to the women's empowerment program and your input into my understanding of their life experiences has uniquely shaped the stories I have told in this essay. To the staff of the SIT Study Abroad program in Cusco, I appreciate your guidance and the constant provisions of coffee and tea that sustained me throughout my time in Peru. To my host parents in Cusco, Angela Castillo Gutiérrez and Henry Salas Zapata, thank you for always being by my side and welcoming me as a full member of your family. I will not forget your support and love during my time in Peru.

To Jim Laine, my academic advisor, thank you for guiding my research and writing processes, for constantly investing in me and my work, and for reassuring me of my path even as I doubted it. You have taught me innumerable lessons, but you have most importantly taught me to remain constantly curious and open-minded to the world around me. You have taught me to believe in my own sense of direction, even when it ruptures the norms placed in front of me, and for that I am forever grateful. To Teresa Mesa Adamuz, my eternal Spanish professor at Macalester, thank you for pushing my Spanish both in and out of the classroom. Thank you for convincing me that I am equipped with the dedication and drive to bring these stories to the fore. Your encouragement in this project, and the drive and heart you have brought to my effort to share it with the communities themselves, cannot be understated.

To all the members of my defense committee: James Laine, Susanna Drake, and Jenna Rice Rahaim, thank you for putting your time and energy into reading and re-reading my writing, for providing honest and constructive feedback, and for bringing all your different perspectives to this project. Through your guidance and leadership, this work has become truly interdisciplinary, and these stories have only become more meaningful for me through your willingness to share your thoughts on it, both academically and personally.

To all my parents, Drew and Chamoni, you have had no small part in modeling the values and passions which have defined this project. Thank you for providing me with an environment in which I was encouraged to stay curious and to follow my passions, and for teaching me to love learning. Thank you for constantly reminding me that nobody can ever take my education away from me. To my brother Cameron, thank you for all your excitement and energy, and the constant hugs throughout the years. I have absolutely loved growing up alongside you and seeing you come into your own. I am so very excited for all the adventures we will undoubtedly have together in the future. To all my family, thank you for teaching me what it is to remain devoted to who and what you hold dearest. I love you all.

To all the members of the Macalester community who have supported me on a daily basis throughout this process, particularly Janessa Cervantes and Pattie Lydon, thank you for listening to all my small triumphs and failures each and every day during the writing process. Thank you for the laughter, genuine interest, and care you have shown me – your determination to see me as a full human being, and not just as a student, has carried me through some of the hardest moments of this year. To all my friends at Macalester, I will hold dear all the time we have had together, and I look forward to the moments we will share in the future. You have taught me how to grasp onto love and kindness and never let it go. Last, but not least, to Dominic Rodgers: you have informed my curiosity and my humility day in and day out in the last year. You have pushed me to challenge my own assumptions about both my own experience and that of those with whom I worked. You have reminded me what it is to do rigorous – but more importantly, meaningful –

work. And you have helped me cultivate when and how to use my voice. I am so thankful for the time we have spent together.

To all those who have taught me and encouraged me to be curious, humble, and empathetic in this world – thank you. Your care and your passion have instilled in me the open-mindedness and determination in me which have made this project possible, and you have brought me to where I am today. Thank you for supporting me, for believing in me, and for loving me.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Alberti, Giorgio, y Enrique Mayer. *Reciprocidad e intercambio en los Andes peruanos*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1974.
- Alsultany, Evelyn. "Los Intersticios: Recasting Moving Selves." In *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*, edited by Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating, 106-110. Routledge: New York, 2002.
- AMSIF Coordinación Nacional A.C. "Bienvenidos a AMSIF." Accessed February 14, 2020. <https://amsif.org.mx>.
- Andersen, Chris. "From Difference to Density." *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 80-100. UTS Library.
- The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*. Edited by Kristin Norget, Valentine Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.
- Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- Badali, Joel John. "Decolonizing the Contact Hypothesis: A Critical Interpretation of Settler Youths' Experiences of Immersion in Indigenous Communities in Canada." *Community Psychology in Global Perspective* 1, no. 1 (2015): 64-85. <https://doi.org/10.1285/i24212113v1i1p64>.
- Bainvel, Rev. Jean Vincent. *Devotion to the Sacred Heart: The Doctrine and its History*. Edited by Rev. George O'Neill. London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1924.
- Baker, Kelly. "What's belief got to do with it?" *Bulletin for the Study of Religion*. Last modified September 28, 2012. <https://bulletin.equinoxpub.com/2012/09/whats-belief-got-to-do-with-it/>.
- Bakker, Matt. "Mexican migration, transnationalism, and the re-scaling of citizenship in North America." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 1 (January 2011): 1-19.
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Beyond Imagined Communities: Reading and Writing the Nation in Nineteenth-Century Latin America*. ed. Sara Castro-Karén and John Charles Chasteen. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003.



- Blackwell, Maylei. "Geographies of indigeneity: Indigenous migrant women's organizing and translocal politics of place." *Latino Studies* 15, no. 2 (July 2017): 156-181. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41276-017-0060-4>.
- Boillat, Sébastien, and Fikret Berkes. "Perception and Interpretation of Climate Change among Quechua Farmers of Bolivia: Indigenous Knowledge as a Resource for Adaptive Capacity." *Ecology and Society* 18, no. 4 (2013): 21.
- Bracho-Sanchez, Edith. "High suicide rate among young Latinas may be exacerbated by anti-immigrant rhetoric, experts say." *ABC News*. January 15, 2019.
- This bridge we call home: radical visions for transformation*. Edited by Gloria E. Anzaldúa and Analouise Keating. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Byrd, Jodi A. "'In the city of blinding lights': Indigeneity, Cultural Studies, and the Errants of Colonial Nostalgia." *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 13-28. UTS Library.
- Carey, Hilary M. *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511921650>.
- Carroll, Michael P. *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1986.
- Celestino, Olinda. "Transformaciones religiosas en los Andes peruanos." *Gazeta de Antropología* 13, artículo 6 (1997): 1-19.
- Chávez Quispe, María. "Transformative Spirituality for a Transformed World: Contributions from the Indigenous Perspective." *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 2 (November 2009): 245-258. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.2009.00020.x>.
- Chidester, David. *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Cipriani, Roberto. *Manual de la Sociología de la Religión*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2011.
- Daniel, E.V. *Charred Lullabies*. Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Daniel, E.V. *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Daniel, E.V. "The arrogation of being." *Macalester International* 8 (2000): 171-191.
- De Francisco, Andrés. *Sociología y cambio social*. Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, S.A., 1997.

- Degregori, Carlos Iván. "Del mito de Inkarrí al mito del progreso: poblaciones andinas, cultura e identidad nacional." *Cambios culturales en el Perú*. Lima: Ministerio de Cultura y Viceministerio de Interculturalidad, 2014.
- Deloria, Vine Jr. *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden: Fulcrum, 1994.
- Di Salvia, Daniela. "Para una dialéctica de la naturaleza andina. Aproximaciones filosófico-antropológicas a las creencias quechuas en los Apus y la Pachamama." *Gazeta de Antropología* 27, artículo 13 (2011): 1-13.
- Diaz, Vicente M. *Repositioning the Missionary: Rewriting the Histories of Colonialism, Native Catholicism, and Indigeneity in Guam*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2010.  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqhck>.
- Dorigo, Guido and Waldo Tobler. "Push-Pull Migration Laws." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 73, no. 1 (March 1983): 1-17.
- Crossing the Border: Research from the Mexican Migration Project*. Edited by Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004.
- Enríquez, Milian Guillermo. "La filosofía intercultural andina en la posmodernidad y la globalización." *Cuadernos de filosofía latinoamericana* 28, no. 97 (2007): 11-19.
- Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. ed. Fredrik Barth. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1998.
- Fotiou, Evgenia. "The Globalization of Ayahuasca Shamanism and the Erasure of Indigenous Shamanism." *Anthropology of Consciousness* 27, no. 2 (2016): 151-179.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/anoc.12056>.
- From Medieval Pilgrimage to Religious Tourism: The Social and Cultural Economics of Piety*. ed. William H. Swatos, Jr. and Luigi Tomasi. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.
- Fuller, Norma. *Turismo y cultura: entre el entusiasmo y el recelo*. Lima: Fondo Editorial, 2009.
- García, María Elena. "Rethinking Bilingual Education in Peru: Intercultural Politics, State Policy and Indigenous Rights." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 7, no. 5 (2004): 348-367.
- García-Johnson, Oscar. *Spirit Outside the Gate: Decolonial Pneumatologies of the American Global South*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

- Guzmán, Elsa and Christopher Martin. "Back to Basics Mexican Style: Radical Catholicism and Survival on the Margins." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 16, no. 3 (1997): 351-366.
- Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America*. Edited by James M. O'Toole. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Hagan, Jaqueline and Helen Rose Ebaugh. "Calling Upon the Sacred: Migrants' Use of Religion in the Migration Process." *International Migration Review* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 1145-1162.
- Hill, Michael. "Myth, Globalization, and Mestizaje in New Age Andean Religion: The *Intic Churincuna* (Children of the Sun) of Urubamba, Peru." *Ethnohistory* 57 (Spring 2010): 263-289.
- Hoenes del Pinal, Eric. "A Ritual Interrupted: A Case of Contested Ritual Practices in a Q'eqchi'-Maya Catholic Parish." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 31, no. 3 (2016), 365-373.
- Hornberger, Nancy H. "Bilingual education success, but policy failure." *Language in Society* 16, no. 2 (1987): 205-226.
- Hornberger, Nancy H. and Luis Enrique López. "Policy, Possibility and Paradox: Indigenous Multilingualism and Education in Peru and Bolivia." In *Beyond Bilingualism: Multilingualism and Multilingual Education*, edited by Jasone Cenoz and Fred Genesee, 206-242. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1998.
- Horsley, Richard A. "Religion and Other Products of Empire." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71, no. 1 (March 2003): 13-44.
- "Immigrants in Minnesota." *American Immigration Council*. 2017.
- Ircó, Mirtha. *La cultura como recurso económico: caso Q'ero*. Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abad del Cusco. (Tesis Doctoral). 2016.
- Isbell, Billie Jean. *Para defendernos: Ecología y ritual en un pueblo andino*. Cusco: Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos Bartolomé de las Casas, 2005.
- Jackson, Michael. *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Jackson, Michael. *The Wherewithal of Life: Ethics, Migration, and the Question of Well-Being*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

- Jensen, et.al. "Small scale migration along the interoceanic highway in Madre de Dios, Peru: an exploration of community perceptions and dynamics due to migration." *BMC International Health and Human Rights* 18:12 (2018): 1-14.
- Kane, Paula M. "'She Offered Herself Up': The Victim Soul and Victim Spirituality in Catholicism." *Church History* 71, no. 1 (March 2002), 80-119.
- King, Mary C. "Mexican Women and Work on Both Sides of the U.S.-Mexican Border." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 70, no. 3 (July 2011): 615-638.
- Laine, James W. "Mind and Mood in the Study of Religion." *Religion* 40 (2010): 239-249.
- Larson, Brooke, and Olivia Harris. *Ethnicity, Markets, and Migration in the Andes: At the Crossroads of History and Anthropology*. Durham: Duke University, 1995.
- Le Borgne, Yann. "Évolution de l'indigénisme dans la société péruvienne. Le traitement du groupe ethnique q'ero." *Ateliers d'anthropologie* 25 (2003): 141-159. Accessed November 20, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.4000/ateliers.8748>.
- Levy, Jerrold E. *In the Beginning: The Navajo Genesis*. Berkeley: University of California, 1998.
- Los Rostros de La Tierra Encantada: Religión, evangelización y sincretismo en el Nuevo Mundo*. José Sánchez Paredes y Marco Curatola Petrocchi, editores. Lima: Fondo Editorial, 2013.
- Mahmood, Saba. *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Mandair, Arvind-pal Singh. *Religion and the Specter of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality, and the Politics of Translation*. New York: Columbia University, 2009. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/mand14724>.
- Marcos, Sylvia. "Mesoamerican Women's Indigenous Spirituality: Decolonizing Religious Beliefs." *Feminist Studies in Religion* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 25-45. Project MUSE.
- Marzal, Manuel. *Tierra Encantada: Tratado de antropología religiosa de América Latina*. Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2002.
- Masci, David. "Why has Pentecostalism grown so dramatically in Latin America?" Pew Research Center. Accessed February 15, 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/14/why-has-pentecostalism-grown-so-dramatically-in-latin-america/>.
- Matovina, Timothy. *Guadalupe and Her Faithful: Latino Catholics in San Antonio, from Colonial Origins to the Present*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- McCord Adams, Marilyn. *Wrestling for Blessing*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2005.

- McCutcheon, Russell T. *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*. New York: Oxford University, 1997.
- McPherson, Robert S. "In the Beginning: The Navajo Genesis." *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 4 (November 1999): 656-658.
- McSweeney, Kendra, and Brad Jokisch. "Urbanization and Emigration among Lowland Indigenous Societies in Latin America." *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26, no. 2 (April 2007): 159-180.
- Meyerson, Frederick A. B., Leticia Merino, and Jorge Durand. "Migration and Environment in the Context of Globalization." *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 5, no. 4 (May 2007): 182-190.
- Molina, J. Michelle. "Making a Home in an Unfortunate Place: Phenomenology and Religion." In *The Anthropology of Catholicism: A Reader*, edited by Kristin Norget, Valentine Napolitano, and Maya Mayblin, 256-270. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017.
- Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. "Imagining the Good Indigenous Citizen: Race War and the Pathology of Patriarchal White Sovereignty." *Cultural Studies Review* 15, no. 2 (2009): 61-79. UTS Library.
- Muehlebach, Andrea. "*Complexio Oppositorum*: Notes on the Left in Neoliberal Italy." *Public Culture* 21, no. 3 (2009), 495-515.
- Muir, Stewart. "The Good of New Age Goods: Commodified images of Aboriginality in New Age and alternative spiritualities." *Culture and Religion* 8, no. 3 (November 2007): 233-253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14755610701649893>.
- Native Diasporas: Indigenous Identities and Settler Colonialism in the Americas*. ed. Gregory D. Smithers and Brooke N. Newman. Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2014. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1d9nn07>.
- Norget, Kristin. "Popes, Saints, Beato Bones and other Images at War: Religious Mediation and the Translocal Roman Catholic Church." *Equinox Publishing* 5, no. 3 (2009), 337-364.
- Nugent, David. "Building the State, Making the Nation: The Bases and Limits of State Centralization in 'Modern' Peru." *American Anthropologist* 96, no. 2 (June 1994): 333-369.
- O'Connor, Mary. *Mixtec Evangelicals: Globalization, Migration, and Religious Change in a Oaxacan Indigenous Group*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/48436/>.

- Odegaard, Cecilie Vindal. *Mobility, Markets and Indigenous Socialities: Contemporary Migration in the Peruvian Andes*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2010.
- Ong Hing, Bill. *Ethical Borders: NAFTA, Globalization, and Mexican Migration*. Philadelphia: Temple University, 2010. JSTOR.
- Orsi, Robert A. *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Orsi, Robert A. *History and Presence*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2016.
- Pace, Enzo. "Systems Theory and Religion." *Civitas* 17, no. 2 (May-August 2017): 345-359.
- Pajuelo Teves, Ramón. *Un río invisible: ensayos sobre política, conflictos, memoria y movilización indígena en el Perú y los Andes*. Lima: Ríos Profundos Editores, 2016.
- Paredes, Christian L. "Multidimensional Ethno-racial Status in Contexts of *Mestizaje*: Ethno-racial Stratification in Contemporary Peru." *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 4: 1-18.
- Parrado, Emilio A. and Chenoa A. Flippen. "Migration and Gender among Mexican Women." *American Sociological Review* 70, no. 4 (August 2005): 606-632.
- Patrick, Donna and Gabriele Budach. "'Urban-Rural' Dynamics and Indigenous Urbanization: The Case of Inuit Language Use in Ottawa." *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 13, no. 4 (2014): 236-253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2014.939034>.
- Pessar, Patricia R. and Sarah J. Mahler. "Transnational Migration: Bringing Gender In." *International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 812-846.
- Pilares Villa, Rubén. *Turismo místico: parodia o trascendencia*. Cusco: Impresiones Lezama S.R.L., 2017.
- Q'ero, el último ayllu inka*. Jorge Flores Ochoa, Juan Núñez del Prado Béjar, y Manuel Castillo Farfán, editores. Lima: Fondo Editorial e Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 2005.
- Ranabolvo, Claudia. *Enfoques de desarrollo territorial y rural*. La Paz: Plural Editores, 2009.
- The Roman Catholic Church in Modern Latin America*. Edited by Karl M. Schmitt. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972.
- Romanticism and Colonialism: Writing and Empire, 1780-1830*. ed. Tim Fulford and Peter J. Kitson. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998.

- Sage, Vanessa. "Encountering the Wilderness, Encountering the Mist: Nature, Romanticism, and Contemporary Paganism." *Anthropology of Consciousness* 20, no. 1 (2009): 27-52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-3537.2009.01009.x>.
- Sanjek, Roger. "Rethinking migration, ancient to future." *Global Networks* 3 (2003): 315-336.
- Santiago-Irizarry, Vilma. "Transnationalism and Migration: Locating Sociocultural Practices among Mexican Immigrants in the United States." *Reviews in Anthropology* 37 (2008): 16-40.
- Scheper Hughes, Jennifer. "Mysterium Materiae: Vital Matter and the Object as Evidence in the Study of Religion." *Bulletin for the Study of Religion* 41, no. 4 (November 2012), 16-24.
- Schiller, Anne. "On the Catholic Church and indigenous identities: Notes from Indonesian Borneo." *Culture and Religion* 10, no. 3 (November 2009): 279-295.
- Shaw, Wendy S., R.D.K. Herman, and G. Rebecca Dobbs. "Encountering Indigeneity: Re-Imagining and Decolonizing Geography." *Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 3 (2006): 267-276. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0459.2006.00220.x>.
- Skeldon, Ronald. "The Evolution of Migration Patterns During Urbanization in Peru." *Geographical Review* 67, no. 4 (October 1977): 394-411.
- Smoak, Gregory E. *Ghost Dances and Identity: Prophetic Religion and American Indian Ethnogenesis in the Nineteenth Century*. Berkeley: University of California, 2006.
- Steele, Diana. "Higher Education and Urban Migration for Community Resilience: Indigenous Amazonian Youth Promoting Place-Based Livelihoods and Identities in Peru." *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 49 (2018): 89-105.
- Steiner, George. *Real Presences: Is there anything in what we say?* London: Faber and Faber, 1989.
- Stone, Ian and Cherrie Stubbs. "Enterprising expatriates: lifestyle migration and entrepreneurship in rural southern Europe." *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* 19 (September 2007), 433-450.
- Tapia, Elizabeth S. "Earth Spirituality and the People's Struggle for Life: Reflection from the Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples." *The Ecumenical Review* 54, no. 3 (July 2002): 219-227.
- Taylor, Lucy. "Decolonizing International Relations: Perspectives from Latin America." *International Studies Review* 14, no. 3 (September 2012): 386-400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2012.01125.x>.

- Treviño, Roberto R. *The Church in the Barrio: Mexican American Ethno-Catholicism in Houston*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Turner, Kay. *Beautiful Necessity: The art and meaning of women's altars*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999.
- Valdés, Dionicio. *Mexicans in Minnesota*. Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 2005.
- Velasco Ortiz, Laura and Dolores París Pombo. "Indigenous Migration in Mexico and Central America: Interethnic Relations and Identity Transformations." *Latin American Perspectives*, Issue 196, 41 no. 3 (May 2014), 5-25.
- Vimeo. "Professor Bruce Lincoln: 'From Ritual Practice to Esoteric Knowledge: The Problem of the Magi.'" Accessed November 10, 2019. <https://vimeo.com/58992557>.
- Ward, Graham. *Theology and Contemporary Critical Theory*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
- Watchel, Nathan. "La réciprocité et l'État inca: de Karl Polanyi à John V. Murra." *Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 29, no. 6 (November-December 1974): 1346-1357.
- Wilson, Fiona. "Indians and *Mestizos*: Identity and Urban Popular Culture in Andean Peru." *Southern African Studies* 26, no. 2 (June 2000): 239-253.
- Wissler, Holly. 2009. "Foundations of Andean Cosmology: *Animu*, *Yanantin*, and *Ayni*." En: Wissler, Holly. From grief joy sing social and cosmic regenerative processes in the songs of Q'eros, Peru. Florida State University. (Tesis Doctoral), pág. 25-37.
- Wissler, Holly. "Q'eros, Perú: la regeneración de relaciones cosmológicas e identidades específicas a través de la música." *Anthropologica* 28 (diciembre 2010): 93-116.



## ANNEXES

## Annexes for Chapter One

## Participants' Information

	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>&amp; Time</b>	<b>Place of Origin</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Catholic Parents?</b>	<b>Attended Catholic School?</b>
<b>Martha</b>	06 JULY 2018	3:00 pm	Guadalajara, Mexico	48	yes	no
<b>Gloria</b>	06 JULY 2018	4:30 pm	Mexico	49	yes	no
<b>Maricela</b>	07 JULY 2018	5:30 pm	Morelos, Mexico	50	yes	no
<b>Cecilia</b>	08 JULY 2018	4:00 pm	Oaxaca, Mexico	42	yes	no
<b>María Isabel</b>	29 JULY 2018	1:00 pm	Morelos, Mexico	44	yes	no
<b>Karina</b>	29 JULY 2018	3:00 pm	Mexico	40	yes	no
<b>Julieta</b>	29 JULY 2018	7:00 pm	Mexico	40	yes	no

## Interview Questions

1. Where are you from?
2. How old are you?
3. Are your parents Catholic?
4. Did you attend Catholic school when you were a child?
5. How did your spirituality affect your life in Mexico?
6. Can you tell me about your migration to the United States? – When did you leave your country, when did you arrive in Minnesota, and when did you become a member of Sagrado Corazón?
7. How did Catholicism, or the Catholic community affect your migration experience?
8. How does your spirituality affect your life in the U.S.? – Has your experience changed throughout your migration process?
9. How has the Sagrado Corazón community affected your ability to grow accustomed to the United States?
10. Can you tell me about the women's empowerment group at Sagrado Corazón?
11. How have the group and the community of women affected your understanding of gender?
12. Finally, what is your favorite part of being Catholic?

## Annexes for Chapter Two

### Participants' Information

I include here the same table as above for reference to the migrants' basic data, in addition to photos and descriptions of each individual interviewee. I received verbal informed consent from the interviewees to include their information and photos here, as many of them cannot speak Spanish, much less read or write.

	Interview Date	Age	Years in Cusco	Occupation	Community
<b>La Señora Victoria</b>	06 NOV 2018	32	10	Director of Weaving	N/A
<b>Víctor Paucar Machaca</b>	07 NOV 2018	42	1	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	Marache
<b>Don Agustín</b>	07 NOV 2018	57	14	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	N/A
<b>Don Claudio</b>	09 NOV 2018	66	15	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	Hatun Q'ero
<b>Don Nicolás</b>	09 NOV 2018	65	3	<i>Pampamisayoq</i>	Hatun Q'ero
<b>Doña María</b>	12 NOV 2018	91	12	<i>Altomisayoq</i>	Kiko Grande



#### **La señora Victoria**

I interviewed Victoria on November 6, 2018 at 4:00 p.m. in her home in the Salvadores neighborhood of San Sebastián. She is 32 years old and has lived in Cusco for 10 years. She moved to the city with her family to improve her children's education. She works as the director of the Q'ero weavings and artisanal work in the city. Although she is not a specialist in performing rituals with the Pachamama, she is a practitioner of the traditional Q'ero practices and discussed these rituals with me during our interview.

*In photo: Victoria weaving, accompanied by two of her children.*

### **Víctor Paucar Machaca**

I interviewed Victor on November 7, 2018 at 7:30 a.m. in his house. Victor and his family live in alto Cusco, at the end of the Expreso el Zorro bus route. He is 42 years old and moved to Cusco in 2017. He is a member of the Marache community of the Q'eros. He also decided to migrate because of the necessity to find better educational infrastructure for his children. He works as a pampamisayoq now, and he is also the leader of his neighborhood's social organization in Cusco.



*In photo: Victor and his wife in their house.*



### **Don Agustín**

I spoke with Don Agustín with interpretation assistance from my advisor, Mirtha Ircó. I interviewed him on November 7, 2018 at 12:00 p.m. We spoke in the Plaza Kusipata in the Cusco city center. Don Agustín is 57 years old and has lived in Cusco for 14 years. He decided to move to the city as a result of the better education system and the increasing difficulty of working in agriculture with the effects of climate change. He now works as a pampamisayoq in the city.

*In photo: Don Agustín with my advisor and interpreter Mirtha Ircó.*

### **Don Claudio**

I interviewed Don Claudio on November 9, 2018 at 10:00 a.m., in his home in the Salvadores neighborhood of San Sebastián. He is 66 years old and was one of the first Q'eros to migrate to Cusco, 15 years ago. He belongs to the Hatun Q'ero community and moved to Cusco to better his children's education. He also mentioned the difficulty of working in agriculture as another reason to move to the city. He now works as a pampamisayoq and has traveled to a few countries outside Peru to perform the Q'ero rituals for other groups.

*In photo: Don Claudio (on the right) with his wife, son, and daughter-in-law.*



### **Don Nicolás**

I spoke with Don Nicolás on November 9, 2018 at 3:00 p.m. in the Basilica Café in the Wanchaq neighborhood of Cusco. Mirtha Irco assisted with interpreting during this interview. Don Nicolás is 65 years old and has lived in Cusco for three years. He decided to move to the city as a result of the difficulty to work as a subsistence farmer in the country. He belongs to the Hatun Q'ero community and now works as a pampamisayoq.

*In photo: Don Nicolás with my advisor and interpreter, Mirtha Irco.*



### **Doña María**

I interviewed Doña María on November 12, 2018 at 9:00 a.m., in her granddaughter's house in the Ununchis neighborhood of San Sebastián. Mirtha Irco once again assisted with interpreting this interview. Doña María is 91 years old and has lived in Cusco for 12 years. She is a member of the Kiko Grande community and is the last altomisayoq of the Q'ero nation. She moved to the city of Cusco to work in performing the Q'ero spiritual traditions, and she has since traveled to various countries in Latin America, North America, and Europe to perform the Q'ero rituals. She still performs these rituals for both the Q'eros and other groups.

*In photo: Doña María wearing her traditional clothing to perform the altomisayoq's rituals.*

### **Interview Questions**

*Interview Questions for the paqo interviewees (various pampamisayoq and Doña María)*

Name:

Age:

Time spent in Cusco:

Occupation:

1. What community do you belong to?
2. When did you leave Paucartambo to come to Cusco?
3. Why did you decide to migrate to Cusco?
4. When did you arrive in San Sebastián?
5. Can you tell me about your migration experience?
6. I'm really interested in the religious practices in Cusco – do you still do your traditional rituals?
7. What ceremonies and offerings did you do in Paucartambo?
8. What ceremonies and offerings do you do here in Cusco?
9. What spiritual beliefs do you hold in Paucartambo?
10. What spiritual beliefs do you hold in Cusco?

11. What are the principal values of these practices in Paucartambo?
12. What are the principal values of these practices in the community here?
13. Is there a relationship between the clothing you wear and these spiritual rituals?
14. Have you noticed a difference in your practices after your migration – do you perform the rituals differently here?
15. Did you think about the significance of those rituals in Paucartambo?
16. Do they have a new significance here, away from the original community?
17. Do you attend Catholic mass more regularly in Cusco?
18. How do these rituals relate to Catholicism?
19. What has changed in your life through your migration? What is different here in Cusco? (food, clothing, language, etc.)
20. Do you feel like part of the Cusqueñan community?
21. Have you encountered difficulties living in Cusco?
22. Have these difficulties changed throughout your time in Cusco?
23. How have your spiritual rituals affected your ability to grow accustomed to your new home?

*Interview Questions for participants in the rituals (La Señora Victoria)*

Name:

Age:

Time spent in Cusco:

Occupation:

1. What community do you belong to?
2. When did you leave Paucartambo to come to Cusco?
3. Why did you decide to migrate to Cusco?
4. When did you arrive in San Sebastián?
5. Can you tell me about your migration experience?
6. I'm really interested in the religious practices in Cusco – do you still do your traditional rituals?
7. What ceremonies and offerings did you do in Paucartambo?
8. What ceremonies and offerings do you do here in Cusco?
9. What are the principal values of these practices in Paucartambo?
10. What are the principal values of these practices in the community here?
11. Is there a relationship between the clothing you wear and these spiritual rituals?
12. Did you think about the significance of those rituals in Paucartambo?
13. Do they have a new significance here, away from the original community?
14. Do you attend Catholic mass more regularly in Cusco?
15. Do you feel like part of the Cusqueñan community?
16. Have you encountered difficulties living in Cusco?
17. Have these difficulties changed throughout your time in Cusco?
18. How have your spiritual rituals affected your ability to grow accustomed to your new home?

## Notes on Terminology

**Identity:** Merriam-Webster defines identity as “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.” I adopt a slightly broader view of identity, such as that described by Andrés de Francisco, which includes all the various aspects of life. He believes an essential nucleus remains within that identity and defines the central character of an individual or community.

**Latino/a/x:** I have refrained from using the words “Latino” “Latina” or the liberal Americanized “Latinx” to describe the communities described in this research. In the search for a more inclusive form of identification, I have chosen “Latin American” in reference to the broader Central and South American regions, and “Mexican” or “Mexicana” when describing the women interviewed for this research.

**Machismo:** Merriam-Webster defines machismo as “a strong sense of masculine pride; an exaggerated masculinity.” The women interviewed described their experience as strife with this ideology, but I do not make an argument here regarding the culture of gender in Mexico.

**Religion:** Defining religion may well be one of the most difficult aspects of working within the field of religious studies. I have chosen to adopt, however, a broad view of religion such as that described by Laine. Although a cleavage may exist between experiences of mind and mood, the opposing parts are not defined either by geography or history. I interpret religion to include both mind and mood, as doing anything else would be overly simplistic.

**Selective assimilation:** Assimilation in its most basic form involves the acceptance of new ideas into the cultural tradition of a population or group. Selective assimilation involves the acceptance of some factors into that cultural tradition, while others remain the same. Selective assimilation allows some aspects of identity to change while maintaining one’s home culture.

## Glossary of Spanish & Quechua Terms

**Alto Cusco:** A broad term used to describe the neighborhoods on the outskirts of Cusco, up the sides of the valley and into the mountains themselves.

**Altomisayoq:** The most advanced level of paqo, or spiritual leader, of the Q'ero community. They perform rituals with the Apus, which appear in the form of birds. Doña María is the only remaining altomisayoq of the Q'ero nation.

**Animu:** The Andean concept that everything on earth has a spirit, including the earth itself.

**Apus:** Centers of spiritual energy, such as mountains, rivers, lakes, or streams. They are often, but not always, characterized as male. These work in duality with the Pachamama, which is female, to bring natural energy into the world.

**Ayni:** The Andean concept of reciprocity – with other people and with the earth. This drives nearly every aspect of the Q'ero nation's livelihood.

**Barrio:** Neighborhood, in Spanish.

**Camino:** Trek or route. Often used to describe the journey from Mexico across the border into the United States.

**Carnaval:** A Latin American Catholic celebration, celebrated in the five days before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. This typically occurs in late January or early February. It is one of two time periods in which the Q'ero migrants return to their home community.

**Chaskas:** Stars, in Quechua. These are also given reverence, in addition to other deities like the Pachamama.

**Chicha:** A drink made from corn (it can be fermented or non-fermented), originating from the Andes and the Amazon. The Q'eros pour out the first sips onto the earth, in honor of the Pachamama.

**Chuño:** A potato that is freeze-dried underground by Quechua and Aymara communities in Peru and Bolivia.

**Despacho:** Offering, in Quechua. The collection of small gifts wrapped in a blanket woven by the community and then burned or buried underground for the Pachamama.

**“El ultimo ayllu inka”:** The moniker given to the Q'ero community by Anthropologist Jorge Flores Ochoa in 1984, establishing their reputation in Peru and around the world as the last living descendants of the Incas, or “the last Incan tribe.” “Ayllu” is a Quechua word which may be translated to community, tribe, family, or group.



**Karpay:** Initiation, in Quechua. Necessary for becoming a paqo in the Q'ero community and occurs after students have completed the necessary training with their established paqo mentor.

**Mamakilla:** “Mother moon,” in Quechua. The Q'ero community gives her reverence in addition to many other recognized deities, like the Pachamama.

**Moraya:** Another version of freeze-dried potato.

**Pachamama:** “Mother earth,” in Quechua.

**Pampamisayoq:** A mid-level paqo, or spiritual leader, of the Q'ero community. They perform rituals with Mother Earth, compiling offerings and reading the coca to interpret the Pachamama's will. They can communicate with the Pachamama and call the Apus to be present during the time of the offering.

**Pagos:** Payments, in Quechua. Another term used to describe despachos.

**Paqo:** Spiritual leader, in Quechua.

**Salvadores:** A neighborhood in Alto Cusco where many of the Q'ero migrants live.

**San Sebastián:** District south of the Cusco city center and Plaza de Armas. Many of the Q'ero migrants live in Alto Cusco above this district.

**Tayta Inti:** “Father sun,” in Quechua. The Q'ero community gives him reverence in addition to many other deities, like the Pachamama.

**Taytaychis:** “Our father,” in Quechua. Used to describe the Christian / Catholic God who is part of the Holy Trinity. The Q'eros call Taytaychis during their offerings, just as they do the natural Andean deities.

**Ununchis:** Another neighborhood in Alto Cusco.

**Yanantin:** The Andean concept of duality, which creates the reciprocity that defines all interactions in the Andean cosmovisión. Yanantin is most obviously revealed in the relationship between the Pachamama and the Apus, but is also modeled in the relationships between men and women.