

Migration Matters: Household, Community and Transnational Movement in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico.

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Migration is not a new process in Mexico. One could argue, without transnational movement the country could not have been created nor exist in its current form. And while we understand general trends in migration, particularly in terms of Mexico's mestizo population, there are many questions left to uncover concerning the place of migration among the country's rural, indigenous population. This paper is a preliminary effort to define migration's place in indigenous Mexican society. There are three key issues that drive the discussion; first, to evaluate theories of migration, particularly in their analysis of indigenous communities, moving away from stereotypic models of the Indian that assume an idealized communalism as a core defining feature without debate; second, to begin to test the assumption that migration, by definition, is a force that leads to a collapse of community, here defined as a group of individuals unified through shared experiences, histories, traditions and common space; and third, to demarcate the parameters of indigenous migration, developing a general picture of movement that is comparable to research in mestizo communities.

Surveys conducted over the summer of 1996 indicate many parallels between migration processes in the indigenous and mestizo communities. Additionally, findings suggest over emphasizing migration's impact and influence upon culture can obscure the creative ways in which social actors cope with far reaching social and economic change. Finally, the data suggests the price of migration need not be the end of community. I argue migration is one part of an ongoing process of change that has involved the community since its founding. Analyzed as part of this overall process of change and development, migration is no longer a force that overwhelms and engulfs a population. This perspective, then, allows us to approach migration as a private decision, made as part of a family's overall survival strategy (see Conway and Cohen n.d.).

Having set the stage, let me begin with three vignettes concerning migration and the indigenous community. The examples come from the lives of three Santañero different men, and concern their experiences as migrants, members of families and of their community. One of my closest informants in the field was a gentleman in his late 70s. Don Laureano was a wonderful storyteller and a great resource on historical information concerning life in Santa Ana, a community of 3,000 Zapotec speakers located in the central valley of Oaxaca.

Don Laureano was born just after the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920. He grew up in a community that was slowly recovering from local fighting between the Constitutional army of Carranza and guerilla forces lead by Benito Juárez Maya (the son of Benito Juárez) and campaigning for Oaxacan independence (see Garner 1988 and CMSD 1992). Fighting in Santa Ana occurred throughout 1916, during which time the village was nearly destroyed as homes and crops were burned (CMSD 1992:12). Santañeros sought refuge in Las Carritas, a ranch settlement in the mountains until 1919 when the village was reoccupied. Don Laureano often talked about the isolation experienced in Santa Ana following the Revolution and the slow pace of Santañero life when he was a young boy (the 1920s and 1930s).

We worked hard here, and who knew about Oaxaca, only a few people, no more. It would give you a susto to go to Oaxaca. When you wanted to go to Oaxaca, you brought your team to the old road. You would leave at 3:00 in the morning, to arrive in Oaxaca at 9:00 or 10:00. That is how it went. Not like now, when you can get to Oaxaca early. Then you would get a susto from leaving so early. . . Now everyone goes. . .

As our conversations continued Don Laureano would talk about his experiences outside the village. He worked on construction projects including the Pan-American highway and travelled to Chiapas for

seasonal labor, at one point selling paletas on the street (ice pops). For all of his movements he did not frame his work away from Santa Ana as migratory or similar to contemporary migration. Don Laureano made a very explicit distinction between what he had done to support his family and what he sees his sons and daughters doing. His experiences took him away from his family and village, but only for short term sojourns of a few months at most. His ties to family and friends remained strong. On the other hand, he finds contemporary migration disturbing. He is particular unsettled by the actions of his three migrant children, the distance between Santa Ana and their receiving communities in California, and the length of time his children spend in the United States. He has two sons who live nearly full time in the United States. Two others move back and forth, making short trips when necessary. A son-in-law rarely returns to Santa Ana to visit. Most difficult for Don Laureano is the daughter who left for the United States and is no longer in contact with the family. I would suspect that much of his ambivalence concerning migration revolves around her loss.

A second exchange took place with the Cruz family. Señor Cruz began the description of his first sojourn as follows; follows, “on one occasion I left, going to Mexico City for temporary work. More than anything I was clearly a stranger in my own country.” And yet he decided to remain in Mexico City, to earn money, learn a trade, and have an adventure. He was quite successful as a migrant, learning automobile mechanics and construction. He also met his wife in Mexico City, a woman who is herself a migrant from a small village in Toluca. Together they returned to Santa Ana to start their family and build their home. They continue to maintain close ties to their relatives in Toluca. Señor Cruz has made additional trips to Mexico City for work, and has always depended upon his in-laws in Toluca as a nearby support group. For all of their success, the Cruz’s will not allowed their children to migrate (although their oldest daughter is nearly 20), and they are instead investing in the post-primary education of their children. I asked the Cruz’s if their experiences were positive? They answered, “the city was really amazing, full of excitement, but it was also filthy and noisy. For this reason we only stayed a year; earned what we needed and then we came home. We decided we could manage here. It is a choice, you can live well here, or you can leave to earn money. We chose to stay.”

Don Mario affords a third example of migrant experience in Santa Ana. He first left the village as a Bracero in 1958 and worked on three contracts before the program ended in 1964 (see Cockcroft 1983). Subsequently he crossed the border independently in search of higher wages on at least twelve different occasions, most recently with his wife to visit their grandchildren who are United States citizens. He said to me:

People ask ‘why do you Mexicans leave for the United States?’ Because we can find *mano de obra*, the answer is so easy: we can earn a minimum wage over there. For example, if we work for the Chinese, they pay twenty-one dollars a day, and we guard that money. Those of us already married, we have responsibilities to the family. We have families, houses, everything, so we guard this money and send it back to Mexico. When the money arrives in Mexico it comes together, because the dollars are worth more than pesos. For example when the dollar is worth 3,000 pesos it is a lot of money. You get together 200 dollars, it is a lot of money, no?

An only child, Don Mario followed in the footsteps of his father who had worked in the United States during the Second World War. Don Mario used his sojourns to become wealthy, and with no siblings to support or with whom he had to share inheritance he became land rich. He used money earned as a migrant to remodel his home, build three additional homes for his eldest children and to purchase additional land in the village. He also invested his time, effort and wealth in the social life of the community. Don Mario has become an influential member of Santa Ana’s ruling class. He regularly holds high status positions in the

local political hierarchy, and he is often consulted on village projects. Only one of his eight children resides in Santa Ana. Three daughters (ages 39, 35, 29) and three sons (ages 31, 27, 21) live in Los Angeles. Ten grandchildren live in the United States, where most were born. One daughter (23) continues to live in Santa Ana. Don Mario and his wife regularly visit their children in the United States, usually staying for up to six months in order to earn money. Rather than a problem, Don Mario describes migration as a mixed blessing, a measure that must be undertaken in order to survive, yet a process that does have its difficulties, particularly when work is to be done in the fields. If he cannot complete work in his fields, he must now hire paid help. Nevertheless, the savings he has made from his work and the remittances he regularly receives from his children allows Don Mario and his wife the time to fully participate in the social life of the community. And while they miss their children and grandchildren they have had few problems gaining legal entry to the United States for visits.

The experiences of Don Laureano, the Cruzes and Don Mario are a small indication of how varied and complex migration is in Santa Ana--and we can imagine for that matter throughout indigenous Mexico. As researchers, one challenge we face is trying to sort out and make sense of this complex process. The remainder of this paper reviews results of research conducted in the summer of 1996, and suggest how we might best approach rural, indigenous migration, and move away from a traditional bias that defines migration as an overwhelming force for change that places a community at risk and undermines cultural identity.

Let us begin then with some basics. When it comes to the discussion and analysis of social, cultural and economic change in rural Mexico, migration is perhaps one of the most important of factors to be investigated. For example, Robert Warren estimates upwards of 1.3 million undocumented Mexican workers living in the United States in 1994 (cited in Verduzco-Igartúa 1995:582). Lozano-Ascencio (1993) calculates migrant remittances at nearly 3.4 billion dollars, and over 55 million dollars in Oaxaca for the 1990 fiscal year. Along with tourism he points out, remittances are becoming one of Mexico's largest sources of capital. Finally, Durand, Parrado and Massey (1996:425) cite a 1992 report by Adelman and Taylor that indicates "each migradollar entering Mexico ultimately produced a \$2.90 increase in Mexico's Gross Domestic Product and raised output by a total of \$3.20." Yet, as their paper also suggest literature on migration is "remarkably pessimistic" concerning the potential effects and consequences of transnational movement.

When it comes to understanding the costs and benefits of migration in indigenous Mexico, analysis is complicated by the stereotypic images we hold of Indian and rural-peasant communities and the emphasis placed on issues of culture change as a negative process (see for example Guidi 1993). Too often these communities are defined as the last, best examples of Pre-Colombian America. They are "noble savages" who stand as the final barrier to capitalism's triumphant destruction of traditionalism (see for example Verhelst 1987). Even the term indigenous causes problems, creating an illusion of permanence and authenticity that denies a very real history of change and adaptation (see Williams 1976:319 on traditionalism).

The Indian community is described as a largely communal entity where class divisions are minimal, if present at all, and social relations tend to create barriers between the local population and the state. Diskin (1995:164) critiques this perspective arguing it "allows too many important phenomena to go unobserved and unanalyzed." And while few researchers would admit they plan to misrepresent native populations, too often their works, "mock serious attempts at social change and denigrate the efforts of long-suffering communities" (see also Cook and Joo 1995).

Unfortunately, such errors in our representations are typical of migration studies and ethnography conducted among indigenous, Mexican communities (Reichert 1982; Guidi 1993; Barabas 1995). In such studies, emphasis is usually placed upon key social or cultural issues, often to the neglect of economic and political processes. Additionally long and short term historical trends are often ignored in the construction of the “ethnographic present” (Roseberry 1989). Given the ahistorical, dichotomized and idealized picture of the Indian community that is created in ethnographic reporting it should come as little surprise that four areas of cultural crisis are typically associated with migration. First, there is the threat migration poses to a community’s human capital. This crisis is often framed in terms of the return migrant’s inability to reintegrate into their natal home, effect positive development within a community, or to potentially undermine local social practice and tradition (Coelho 1989; Weist 1979; Bovekerk 1988; and see Rouse 1992 for an excellent alternative). Second, migration is thought to lead to a rapid decline in self-reliance and self-sufficiency as the Indian or indigenous community grows dependent upon national and international business cycles and markets (Guidi 1993; Reichert 1982). Third, the rise in market access brings growing demand for consumer goods and services, further undermining so called “self-reliant” communities and replacing their traditional crafts with poor, factory made substitutes (see Brana-Shutes and Brana Shutes 1982). This leads to the fourth crisis, the investment of hard earned “migradollars” in family maintenance fostering little “real” economic development. Rubenstein goes so far as to argue increasing remittances leads instead to the economic deterioration of rural Mexico, as suggested in the creation of ever more rigid class division in the rural setting (1992:131-133). It is argued that taken as a whole, these forces are a sure signal of a community’s cultural collapse, an end to sociability and in the case of the indigenous society, a crisis in traditional patterns of association (Reichert 1982:421). Yet, the mistake is not that the assumed outcomes are patently wrong, rather it is that these positions fail to place migration into a broader process of change, and highlight cultural degradation (here framed as cultural integrity and independence) rather than the complex interrelationship of migration as part of an ongoing historical process of economic and social development.

Evidence from Santa Ana suggests that while the above assumptions concerning migration can be true, they are by no means universally found in all migratory situations and are decidedly not necessary the outcome of crossing the border. Furthermore, these outcomes, if and where they are found, are not necessarily common to an entire population. In other words, the challenges enumerated by the critiques of migration noted above are not predictive of migration’s effect on rural society, nor are they determinative of the individual migrant actions. They are only one out of many of the various outcomes migration’s impact can have on a population.

In place of the “traditional” approaches briefly enumerated above, I propose to build on a model developed by Conway and Cohen (n.d.) that evaluates migration as a process that complements a household’s overall survival strategy and where remittances are an additional source of capital for a family. This “real life economics” approach recognizes migration as essentially a private decision that may well be influenced by a population’s social beliefs and cultural practices as well as international business cycles and markets, but is decidedly not exclusively determined by any one of these forces.

As stated, Santa Ana, Oaxaca is a rural peasant community of 3,000 people, identified linguistically as a Zapotec, and therefore falling into the category of an indigenous village. With its deep roots in Pre-Colombian history, a tradition of handicraft production and a strong tie to land and agriculture the village appears removed from the political concerns of the state and the economic concerns of global markets; a typical indigenous community, characterized by a peaceful and welcoming population, red tiled roofs, a slow pace and a bucolic aura. Nevertheless, Santañeros are part of a global economy, and their

identity as Indian, while a part of the economic equation they live, is not the most important of factors determining the structure of local society and the role or impact of migration (Cook and Joo 1995).

Santañeros are linked to markets around the world through the production of tourist art in the village and, among other things the growth in availability and demand for goods and services locally (Cohen 1994; Cohen 1996). The village is also far from a homogenous social entity. It is divided into distinct classes and ruled by elites, typically families who are land rich, independent producers of weavings for export (see Stephen 1991; Cook and Binford 1990). Santa Ana is also tied closely to the political machinations of the state through cultural programs, development projects and education (Cohen forthcoming). Finally, Santa Ana is, not surprisingly, a net exporter of human capital, as villagers seek higher wage work, education and new opportunities outside of the community, something that has become more common among most of Oaxaca's indigenous communities (Embriz 1993).

Santa Ana: a brief history of migration

Migration is at the very heart of Santa Ana as a social entity and its roots as a place. Local legend maintains the village was founded by itinerant merchants moving through the area and looking for easy passage into the Sierra (this is around 1200AD). Perhaps this image of pre-Colombian life does not appear to share any parallels to contemporary migration. Yet for the itinerant merchant, travelling from village to village along mountain paths likely followed a process quite similar to the movement of today's migrants between countries. The village itself was founded in part to make the movement of goods and market connections work more smoothly, and we can image that each new trader through the area brought with him or her new knowledge, goods and possibilities, again paralleling the role of the modern day returned migrant.

In the sixteenth century, the community was reestablished following the conquest when area populations were forcefully relocated by the Catholic Church following their congregación policy. This program centralized thinly spread populations and those communities devastated by disease into easily controlled units, facilitating religious conversion and political domination (Chance 1978; MacLeod 1973). Santa Ana was organized as a congregación, bringing in families from the surrounding region, whether the community was ethnically Zapotec is difficult to tell. However, Chance notes the congregaciones were not successful, and the constituent population often returned to its natal home.

There are few records documenting Santa Ana during the colonial period and the years of the early Republic, however, by the Porfiriato, the village had begun to attract migrants from as far away as Europe following the opening of three small mines, the Trinidad, Guadalupe and Soledad, that were financed by a British investor (CMSD 1992). The owner established a small settlement around the mines for his workers. According to Maria Gutierrez, the daughter of a miner, men from around the world worked the lodes and Santañeros were hired to for heavy and unskilled labor. Maria told me about the wealth the mines brought to the village:

My father and uncle worked at the mines for a long time. They carried stones and helped break up the rocks. They were paid a peso a day for their work. Oh, that was a lot of money then [in the 1930s a day's work as a field hand paid twenty centavos]. There were people from all over then, they took gold and silver from the mines. But now, well now, it is closed. My brother mined a little after the war, after we came back from the ranch, but really, the mines are closed.

The mines closed with the violence of the Mexican Revolution, and as noted in Don Laureano's comments, the village was the site of fighting. In response to the dangers posed by Federal and guerilla forces in the area, the population fled Santa Ana, hiding in las Carritas for three years (CMSD 1992).

It was not until the 1950s that the population fully recovered from the losses of the revolution. During these difficult years of rebuilding migration was already high in response to Mexico's weakened economy and the demand in the United States for workers Verduzco-Igartúa (1995; and see also García y Griego 1983).

A slow, but steady trickle of migrants left the village following the Revolution, and in response to continued economic instability (Ruiz Martinez 1992). Don Mario's father was one of the few to leave for the United States. Many other men headed for Mexico City, a move brought about by what Arzipe (1981:620) describes as "the golden age for rural migrants in Mexico," and built upon the myth that anything was possible for the migrant who would leave their rural home. A handful of Santañeros participated in the Bracero program, others sought work and education in Oaxaca City, which remains an hour commute from the village to this day. Ironically it was the early migrants who built Santa Ana into the "traditional" village admired by locals and tourists alike. They slowly replaced cane homes with adobe, introduced the regular, celebratory use of high cost prestige foods like *mole* and developed the weaving industry from a marginal, part-time occupation to an important and central productive strategy.

A rapid increase in migration occurred in the 1970s as Santañeros sought work across the border, and an escape from the ever more difficult demands of rural life. The growing burden in Santa Ana came from fundamental contradictions in Mexican agricultural policies. Citing the work of the economist Gomez Oliver, Arzipe notes, he estimates maize lost 33 percent of its value between 1957 and 1973. As she points out, this price collapse undermined small land holders. At the same time, development policies favored wealthy landowners and large scale irrigation projects (1981:629-631). Thus small-holders were left with few supports and a primary crop that was rapidly losing value. Further complicating the situation, there was an overall decrease in the creation of jobs in Mexican cities (Contreras 1972:408). Finally, there was the crises of the 1980s and the collapse of the pesos. The minimum wage fell to only one tenth its United States equivalent, adding fuel to transnational migratory pressure (see Corona-Vázquez 1993; and Angel-Castillo 1995:275). Migration then, has played a central role in the evolution of Santa Ana, from its founding as a way station for travellers moving goods between the sierra and valley to the present; a time when Santa Ana has become a way station for humans moving between their natal home and the United States.

Contemporary migration in Santa Ana

The evidence of migration is obvious in the changing structure of the Santañero community and society. But the changes noted are not all brought about by migration. An important force for change is a rapid increase in the village's population, doubling in the last thirty years. This increase brought a boom in house building as Santañeros constructed new homes and remodel older structures to meet the demands of growing families. The second most frequent response to the questions concerning the decision to migrate, was to build or improve a home. Of 126 responses concerning the use of remittances, 27% of the respondents cited home building as their primary goal for the funds. Additionally, 8% said they planned to remodel and 2% hoped to use their earnings to purchase land for future homes, for a total of 37% of all responses, and second only to regular family support which accounted for 42% of the responses.

The expansion and improvement of homes in the village continues in part to keep pace with a growing population, but it is also in response to changing demands for amenities and services by the population at large. Santañeros are constructing larger, more permanent, multi-storied, walled-in dwellings often described as “California houses” in reference to both the style of the home and the origins of the money to support construction. Villagers are wiring those dwellings for electricity, water and gas, and filling them with major consumer goods including refrigerators, televisions, automobiles and the like. To illustrate the change in house style and technological improvements, we can look to the shift in homes between 1970 and 1990. In 1970, a little less than ½ the homes in the village were wired for electricity (126 of 272) and no homes had piped water (SIC 1971). In 1980, 280 of 399 homes had access to electricity, but only 17 homes had piped water, additionally, 264 homes were adobe and 41 were of brick construction (INEGI 1983). In 1990 the total number of homes increased to 425 units. Of this total, 415 were wired for electricity, 111 were serviced by piped water and 168 were constructed of brick and concrete (INEGI 1992). Over the same period we find a rapid growth in the number of rooms per home. In 1960, 243 of 269 homes were one room structures (SIC 1963). In 1990 only 13 single room homes remained. There were 153 two room homes and 133 three room homes (INEGI 1992).

A second area in which we see migration’s impact is in the growth (albeit slow) of the local economy. Migration is often framed as an economic drain or at least a negative force in local affairs. Reichert (1982:471) suggests migration results in a severe imbalance in what was once a relatively homogeneous social system. The mistake is the emphasis placed upon the negative outcomes of migration, and the assumption of social homogeneity. Communities like Santa Ana include a range of class and status differences. Migration may influence these difference, and exacerbate a families need for cash to meet the demands of new market relations, but does not create the problems whole cloth.

An alternative analysis is submitted by Durand, Parrado and Massey (1996:425) who point out, remittances or “migradollars” spent within the country and small village have a “potentially strong multiplier effect.” This position emphasizes the positive benefits remittances can have upon a community as they are used to purchase consumer goods and, for a small percentage of the funds, invested into new business ventures. Working in Tonga, Brown and Connel (1994:639) find remittances build a thriving, if small, business sector, something that could not happen without migration. Similarly, to serve growing demands for goods and services a in Santa Ana there is a need for new businesses and business men and women.

Over the last decades, the village has shown marked growth from only two tiendas in 1960 to a wide variety of businesses today. When there were only two dry-goods stores in the village, most Santañero made the four kilometer trek to Tlacolula for any other purchases. Thirty-five years later, there are two glass and metal-work shops in the village, a car repair, two home building contractors, a water delivery service and at least seventeen family-run businesses including; a copy shop, gift shop, farm supplier and three bakeries. There is also at least one full time hair salon and two restaurant/cafes (and see Durand, Parrado and Massey 1996: 428).

Public works funded through a combination of monies collected locally and state matching funds are staffed with tequio crews (labor brigades) and are improving the electrical grid, streets, developing a reservoir, replanting municipal forest lands, installing a sewer system and increasing access to the potable water system. Other state projects include the building of a new primary school in 1994, a guest house in 1996 that is affiliated with the village’s museum program (a state run project), the construction of a library and performing arts space, a weaving cooperative and the continued refurbishment of the municipal office buildings.

A related area of growth is found among those migrants who depend on hired help to maintain lands when they are gone. Caretakers gain income and useable land in this relationship. The traditional cargo system (religious/political hierarchy) is also creating a small demand for workers. Migrants elected to local office depend on relatives to fill positions when they are unable to return to the village. For those Santañero migrants who cannot find family to cover a cargo for free, a worker is typically hired and paid to cover the service demands.

These changes are also slowly affecting the status of women in the village. Señora Lupe Aquino replaced her husband on a minor committee, the alumbrado publico, or public lights committee which manages the payment and billing for electricity in the community, when he left to work in the United States as a bus boy in Santa Monica, California. She described the situation as unsettling and tense, however, she enjoyed the time spent on the committee and often reminded her male colleagues that they could also dismiss her husband's service requirement and she would be glad for the time saved. I asked her if she would like to serve again, and we joked about her becoming a president of a high ranking cargo. As we finished she admitted that she hoped more women would become involved in local and state politics.

Filling cargo positions and working on migrant lands is particularly important for those villagers who are landless or land poor, and those Santañeros unable or unwilling to leave the community. In the summer of 1996, the village paid workers from funds collected from community households to complete a reservoir project when the skill and demands for time grew too much to be met using only tequio. Here then, we find the funds that are generated primarily from migration are driving the overall development of the village.

While these signs of development point to the kinds of changes taking place in Santa Ana, and the place migration plays in that process should be obvious, such information does little to indicate what migration "looks like" in Santa Ana. Here then I want to share findings from summer 1996 research. I have divided this section into three parts, first to define the structure of migration, second to relate my findings to other work in Mexico and third to explore the question of the decline in sociability by focusing on the role community service plays in the life of the migrant and his or her family.

In 1996 I conducted 54 snow-ball surveys of Santañero families, here defined as affinally and consanguineally related individuals who at least ideally share a residence and pool resources. The surveys included information on the married children of older informants and increased the total number of families represented to 132. In all, we gathered information on 325 people ranging in age from 6 months to 75 years. The surveys were conducted with one or both family heads present. Where possible as much information on adult children was collected. Open ended discussions often included adult children, where possible, to flesh out details concerning migration experiences and family dynamics. Nonscientific phone interviews have also taken place with Santañero migrants living in the United States.

The first point that jumps out from the information collected is the pervasiveness of migration in the village. Of the 54 primary families identified, nearly all had experience with migration. Only 17 of the 54 families had no immediate group members with first hand migration experience. When asked if anyone knew of more distant relatives that had migrated, the number of families with no ties to a migrant dropped to only eight.

Interviews and surveys identified three phases of migration in Santa Ana and suggested a fourth. First from the 1920s to the 1950s migration tended to keep Santañeros close to home and involved in manual labor, most often agricultural labor in the central valleys of Oaxaca, and on plantations and state construction projects. For example, many of the older men in the village spent time working on the pan-American highway as it went through the state.

A second phase of migration began in the 1950s as Santañeros join the Bracero movement, working on short term contracts in the United States. An outcome of participation in the Bracero program was to introduce Santañeros to American culture and society, although in a controlled manner. It was interesting to find that the men who had participated in the Bracero program all had a very positive opinion of the United States and the importance of migration as one part of a family's overall survival strategy. This was quite different from younger migrants who often talked about their border crossings and treatment in the United States in relatively ambivalent terms. For these young men and women, the allure of the United States, its markets, jobs and society, is strong, yet they understand all too well just how marginal their position in once in the receiving communities like Los Angeles, California.

Contemporary migration is part of a third phase of movement that begins in the late 1970s and increases through the middle 1980s. First trips abroad rise rapidly in response to continued economic difficulty in Mexico throughout the decade. Between 1979 and 1989 a total of 29 of the 54 family heads interviewed made their first trips. These men tended to stay in the United States for an average of one to two years and tended to work in low skill, low wage labor rather than agriculture. Ironically, the amnesty program begun by the Reagan administration in 1986 was cited as a reason for migration by two men during research in 1992. These men married into North American families in order to be naturalized and receive green cards even as they maintained their Santañero homes and families.

There are indications that migration is leveling off in the village. First trips are down since the late 1980s (although this is may also be a sampling error). Nevertheless, Santañeros surveyed and interviewed describe the decline as due to growing anxiety over border crossing and more particularly the changes in U.S. and California immigration policies, increasing competition for jobs in the United States, and their own feeling that migration is not necessarily always the right choice. Three men interviewed in 1996 had earned enough money to begin small, self-supporting businesses (a tailor shop, a rug export business and a restaurant), making migration a option that at least at the moment, conflicts with the demands of business development.

A common thread among migrants in Santa Ana is their age at the time of their first migration and the developmental stage of their families. Migrants in our sample range in age from 15 to 57 at the time first trip. However, the modal age of a Santañero migrant is 21 years old at the time of a first trip. Additionally, two of the older survey respondents, making their first trips at 55 and 57 years of age were leaving to meet their children or siblings in the United States.

The majority of the men describing their first, and subsequent migrations were, at the time of their first trip newly married, the fathers of young children, or fathers to growing families. Of our respondents 43% cited the need to cover family expenses as their key reason for migrating. This group remitted funds regularly rather than lumping funds to help their families meet the costs of living more effectively. For this group, migration has the potential to bring a quick infusion of cash to help support a family, and build a home. Older and more successful migrants move more of their earning into businesses, land purchases and big ticket items. Older informants were also more likely to lump their funds rather than remitting on a

regular basis. This difference is likely an artifact of the times in which these migrants began moving. Older migrants did not have the option to remit using electronic means like Western Union, or bank drafts.

Work history also correlates with migration experiences. The more successful migrant, here defined as the person making more trips more regularly, typically comes from a family involved in independent weaving alone (14.2% of the sample of families, but the largest group of migrants at 30.2 %), or a family combining independent weaving with limited agricultural production (20.6 % of the sample, and the second largest group of migrants at 23.3%).

Santañeros who rely almost entirely upon farming (11.97% of the sample), contract weaving (6.26% of the population) or a combination of farming and contract weaving (25.2% of the sample, the largest category) for their income are typically not as successful as migrants. Only 7.8% of the migrant population are full time farmers, 6% are contract weavers and 13.8% depend on a combination of farming and contract weaving.

The difference between more and less successful migrants is in large part one of work constraints, social status, economic knowledge, and motivation. The farm family is tied to land and the demands of a set agricultural cycle. While a family may be able to feed itself from its land and the sale of crops, profits are minimal, leaving little extra cash to cover the direct and indirect costs of migration. The former being such items as the cost of a bus ticket to the border and the later the expense of hiring labor to cover the shortfall in a family's workers.

The contract weaver, or the combination of contract weaving and farming is also a limited profit making venture. Contract weavers typically have very little free capital available. The contract weavers work for middlemen and exporters who pay per piece usually on weekly contracts, and produce lower quality goods that are mass marketed to tourists (see Cohen 1994; Cook and Binford 1990; and Stephen 1991). The control of the contract market brings with it the security of steady demand, however, it is a difficult way to earn extra capital to support migration.

The independent weaver, on the other hand, must have knowledge of markets, prices, style and demand. They also need to have capital on hand to cover drops in the market, shifts in demand and the costs of raw materials. It should be little surprise then, that independent weavers tend to be in a higher economic class than their contract weaving compatriots. Furthermore, their success in the market is usually translated into success in the political life of the community, and finally, success as migrants.

Migration is moving into a new phase in Santa Ana as more women and families with children leave Santa Ana for receiving communities in California. A second important receiving community is Tapachula, Chiapas where two Santañero families have established bakeries. A more diverse group of Santañeros appears to be migrating as well. Poorer families send representative to find work, and younger single men and women are leaving for the United States. Many of these unattached individuals who leave, frame their movements as similar to a rite of passage. A concern for overall economic success is replaced by the adventure of travel. Finally, Santañero are beginning to move beyond their "traditional" receiving communities of Los Angeles and Santa Monica, California in search of higher wage labor and lower social tension. This has lead one informant to move to Lexington, Kentucky and a handful of additional migrants to seek new jobs in Washington and Oregon.

This pattern, where migration becomes a real option for an ever more diverse population is found throughout Mexico. Massey, Goldring and Durrand (1994:1497-1498) suggest this “cumulative effect of migration” indicates it is becoming a safer, less costly and therefore more common option. It is also a self-reinforcing process, that is, success in migration, leads to more migration. The arrival of new goods and services reinforces that demand. Increasing demand for goods and services in turn brings a need for cash, which further reinforces the need to migration.

Massey, Goldring and Durrand (1994) also point out the social meaning and role of the sending community changes as migration increases. Natal homes become places of leisure where migrants are able to exercise their social status and display their newfound wealth. In Santa Ana, this shift is obvious in the community programs and projects organized around the village arts center and museum. As successful migrants, particularly legal migrants get older, they also contemplate a return to Santa Ana for their retirement. Jorge Sanchez Cruz, told me one afternoon of his retirement plans. A legal migrant with over a decade of social security payments, Señor Cruz was remodeling his home, bringing in piped water and had begun to purchase the necessary parts for a satellite television system. A 57 year old return migrant talked about retiring with social security and finding the time to enjoy life in Santa Ana again. Finally, basketball is growing as an important local pastime and the kinds of close friendships that arise between players recreate the reciprocal ties of traditional patterns of Santañero cooperation (see Cohen 1994).

Concern for social changes brought about by migration brings me to the final issue of discussion, the affect migration has on sociability and communal action. There is the belief that migration comes at a high social cost, destroying families, fracturing local systems of association and leading to the rapid demise of traditional systems of beliefs (Reichert 1982; Guidi 1993). There are at least two alternative paths through which to analyze the social costs of migration. The first, is to move away from a discussion of community as a thing responding to migration, and toward the examination of the way in which families, as social units, deal with migration as a process bundled together with social and economic change. Following a migrant’s or family’s plans to pool or hoard resources, invest in community or personal affairs will begin to indicate how social actors are responding to economic change. A second approach tests the assumptions of community decline by collecting data on levels of community service among migrant and non migrant populations. Decreasing participation on the part of migrants would likely be one important sign of a community’s decline.

First, a few comments on the decision to migrate and the choice to pool or hoard resources. While community traditions can exercise a great deal of influence upon any person, they do not guarantee a social actor will choose to follow the rules--the community is a non-determinative structure (see for example Watanabe’s 1992 discussion of community). In Santa Ana we find just such a pattern, there are successful, cooperative families where resources are pooled and who are heavily invested into the life of the community. There are also families where individual’s hoard personal resources, withholding from their relatives and having little to do with the communal life of Santa Ana. Around these two poles of family organization there are a spectrum of other possibilities, from poor poolers to wealthy hoarders, families that invest socially, and those who decline to participate in community life.

Working among Purepecha furniture makers, Acheson develops a three part model upon which to examine investment strategies (1996). His models explains why some Purepecha families succeed in the furniture business while others struggle to simply survive. He found that a key element in a family’s success was its ability first to pool funds, and second to invest pooled funds in something more than household reproductive costs. The possibilities include the “disaster household” where pooling is at a

minimum, and the family moves from crisis to crisis; the “typical household” where funds are pooled and used primarily for family maintenance; and finally, the “successful household” pools as well, however, a portion of the general funds a family holds are used in business ventures and not simply to meet reproductive costs.

This household model is readily adaptable to Santa Ana and the analysis of migration and the use of remittances. What the surveys indicate is that migration when it does occur does little to improve the situation for “disaster” families. In the cases where the migrant is able to leave, he or she tends to make decisions independent of other family members. Income is spent on personal desires or hoarded for future needs. Family maintenance tends to be a story to which only perfunctory attention is paid, and into which little energy is invested. The head of one disaster family (not represented in the sample) regularly talked about investing in homebuilding as a way to protect his wife and children, yet in over a decade of travels between the Santa Ana and the west coast of the United States he had yet to remit enough funds to finish a one room structure.

A double disaster occurs where the family does little to invest in the community’s well being. In these instances, there are few if any social relationships that will support the disaster family in periods of intense stress. Alternatively, there are disaster families who are able to build minimal support networks by, in effect, rolling over for high status individuals and families in the village. The disaster family member becomes an ardent supporter of a particular elite Santañero and in doing so gains a level of guaranteed favor in exchange for unquestioned loyalty.

For the typical family, migration is yet another way to increase the pooling of resources. In these situations, often times an family of independent producers who send a member to remit funds, the remittances go toward family maintenance, first home building and household improvements second, and the purchase of major appliances last. Pooled funds from migration also support participation in the social life of the community, covering the costs of committee work in the local cargo system or the support of a mayordomia (family sponsored celebrations). In many of these typically households, the decision to migrate is made at nearly a unit level. The member of the household who does leave in search of wages knows that his or her remittances will go toward family maintenance and not personal wealth. But he or she also realizes that their actions help secure the future through. Felipe Cruz, a 20 year old bachelor, had just such a relationship with his family. He spent about 2 years in the United States, remitting regularly to his father who invested funds in the family’s home, the education of Felipe’s siblings.

Finally, for the successful families in the village remittances create the capital for business expansion and investment, as well as the reproduction of family and participation in the communal life of the village. Successful families participate in the life of the village because they can, not because they must. Their interests lie in enhancing their social capital and translating migratory success into local power (Greenberg 1995). They use the funds they have collected to build social networks that bring with them prestige and support according to local ideals and morality (see Watanabe 1992).

The successful family also tends to put aside funds for business and investment. As with any group, the successful families are in the minority. One successful family invested the funds made through migration into their weaving business. The money helped to cover the expense of buying-up weavings and holding them until market demand and prices rose. A second family used the funds to purchase the supplies necessary to open a small cafe, serving meals and drinks.

In the examples of the disaster, typical and successful households we find migration is not a force that determines the structure of the family. Rather the family decides to migrate. The outcome of migration is determined instead by the level of the family's status before migrating and the level of their success during and after their sojourn. The disaster family gets nowhere economically, whereas the successful family builds savings to re-invest in something more than family maintenance.

Now we come to the final issue of this paper, testing whether community declines in response to migration. There is the belief that migration will bring the downfall of a social system and a growth in "atomistic behavior" (see Cancian 1992; Gilmore 1975). As I have argued throughout this paper, such a pattern places the cart before the horse and grants migration far too much power and influence in the cultural life of a community. Here I would like to propose a test that will allow for the quantification of migration's effect on the social and cultural life of a group. Given that one sign of a community's involvement in capitalism is atomistic behavior, we should find it increases in relation to an increase in migration. Furthermore, if this increase is found, it should be expressed in the declining participation of a population, particularly the migrants of a population, in the social life of the community.

Certainly there are Santañeros who have opted not to participate in the cargo systems of the village, as there have always been. However, our surveys indicate that people are not dropping out of these voluntary associations at an increasing rate. In fact, there are indications in Santa Ana that migration is invigorating the cargo system, and making money available to support community participation in ways that were not possible only a few decades ago.

Like most rural Mexican communities, Santa Ana has a cargo system or organized system of hierarchically ranked political and religious positions that manage the daily political and religious life of the community. In 1992-93, I identified nearly thirty-five minor committees, three major political committees and two major religious committees. In addition, there were two mayordomias sponsored for saints in the village.

The demands of a cargo varies a great deal from the minor to major committees. A minor position often includes one year of service and little demand on time and effort. The street committee, for example, is empaneled to care for and patch village roads. The work is hot and can take time, yet it is not a constant burden and service is complete in one year. A major cargo, on the other hand, like the municipal authority includes three years of nearly daily service. Many Santañeros commented they would not be able to manage the burden of high ranking cargo work without the support of their children.

To test if cargo participation was on the decline we asked Santañeros to describe their record of community service and to enumerate the cargo positions held through time. The surveys reveal little relationship between migration and participation. We did however, discover three correlations. The first exists between the age of the participant and cargo experience. As individuals grow older their experience and position with a cargo increases (moving from voting member to secretary, treasurer and president) and the rank of the cargos they serve increases as well (certainly not a surprise I would think). A second less pronounced pattern is apparent in the trajectory of cargo service. Minor political cargos are followed by higher status political cargos and minor religious cargos are followed by higher ranking religious cargos.

Santañeros can follow a path that is made up of service in exclusively minor cargos throughout their lives. Theses men often repeat service in a particular committee, such as the village police or the school committees, and at the same time move up into higher status positions (treasurer and president) in

these committees. Other Santañeros choose more costly and prestigious religious service, but tend to fill fewer cargos over time. There is also the tendency for a Santañero who has held a high ranking position in any committee to hold additional high ranking positions in the future. Finally, there is an indication that too many trips over too many years can influence the rank of the position as well as the cargo to which a person is elected. The optimal combination for an older man is two or three migrations supporting anywhere from 5-12 cargo positions of increasing rank through time. Men who migrate more than 3 times did not necessarily see their service requirements decline, however, they were typically not chosen to hold high ranking office on important committees.

Cargo participation is an important indicator to continue to document in the study of Santañero migration. It is obviously quite possible that participation in the political life of the village can change rapidly. Mayordomia support, for example, is increasing in the village and there was talk in 1993 of reviving at least one moribund celebration. The vitality of the cargos and mayordomias will be important to document, particularly if migration continues to increase and be transformed. Furthermore, as Santañero migrants have children in their receiving communities, and those children become more and more tied to the culture and society of the United States there may be a real and definable decline in cargo participation. At the moment the system appears in equilibrium. Migrants cycle in and out of the community and the cargos, but the number of Santañeros leaving has not out paced the number of migrants returning to the village.

Conclusions

In this paper I have used data from Santa Ana to suggest the anthropological analysis of migration errs by over-emphasizing the cultural ramifications of movement without fully considering its historical antecedents and broader economic and social processes. This causes errors in analysis that can be divided into four particular areas. First, too often migration is dehistoricized in our analysis. Our bias toward the village study is one part of this problem. Focusing on local affairs, it is easy to forget the many relationships that exist between rural community, state, nation and world. Additionally, when we begin to document the interaction of local and extra-local forces we are often overwhelmed by their drama. Examining migration, we forget it is a process with both a micro-history and macro-history, and must be understood as such. In other words, we fail to place migration into the big picture of development, but we also fail to follow its local story. Santa Ana was built and rebuilt around migration whether we are talking about itinerant traders who founded the village as a way-station on trails into the Sierra or we are considering the life of a Santañero who works as a bus boy in Santa Monica, California.

Second, we tend toward generalizations of migration that do not define its relationship to economic and social transformations. We assume that migration is a patterned, predictable process, with a predictable outcome, the decline of community. Here I have shown that migration is a patterned process, but it is decidedly not an independent force overwhelming a community. Rather it is a private decision made by a family and influenced by history, tradition, economic experience and desire. As such, migration in the indigenous community parallels what other researchers have found among Mestizo populations throughout Mexico. Santañero migration follows quite closely the trends Massey, Durrand and Parado describe in their discussion of continuities in 19 Mexican villages and the findings here suggest it is time to broaden our discussion to include Indian village. Broadening the discussion to include the indigenous or Indian community in turn helps our understanding of the dynamic and powerful ways in which these people respond to change.

Third, an emphasis on family decision making also moves our discussion away from the analysis of homogeneous communities and embraces variation, opening what Wilk (1989) has called the “black box” of household relations (and see Wilk 1991). We discover that community is not determinative of action, rather it is the choices that people make, and these choices fall into particular categories. Here I have used Acheson’s (1995) tripartite model of disaster, typical and successful households to begin to understand how migrants organize remittances. This leads in turn to understanding how we as researchers can often fetishize migration. Rather than approaching the process of migration as something that is created in the actions of the person, it is often defined as an autonomous, unregulated thing, engulfing the innocent and unaware. The migrant, as a person, is lost in the definition of him or herself as a subject of a process, migration. The approach advocated here restores the individual to our analysis, and examines how decisions are made concerning migration, and the ramifications of those decisions to families and community.

Finally, we have tested whether migration truly has a negative impact upon community. The data from Santa Ana reveals that migration can have unanticipated outcomes. Specifically, migration need not undermine community and can, at moments, lead to its continued vitality. In fact, Santañeros build new relationships around migration that follow traditional patterns of social association. The networks that develop from these relationships are important resources for the migrant as he or she begins a new phase of life in a receiving community. Migration then cannot be distilled to a particular cultural response carrying within it a particular outcome. It is only one part of an ongoing process of change, adaptation and development, and must be understood as such.

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