

PURIJKUNA OTAVALAN TRANSNATIONAL MIGRANTS: INDIGENOUS GLOBAL MOBILITY AND THE POLITICS OF DESTINATION

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This article engages themes of indigenous transnational migration, diaspora and cosmopolitanism as they relate to a community of Quichua-speakers from Northern Ecuador known as Otavaleños or Otavalans. I explore the ways by which travel and mobility are central to Otavalan self-ascribed identities; build on the important ways in which sites of destination influence migrants' experiences and also inform scholarly methods and theoretical frameworks; and draw on personal narratives to highlight the extraordinary heterogeneity of experiences among Otavalan migrants.

Keywords: Indigenous migration, transnationalism studies, global mobility, indigenous cosmopolitanism, Latin America, Andes

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) there are currently over 200 million transnational migrants worldwide. The IOM suggests that international migrants could number as many as 405 million by 2050 if migration continues to grow at the same pace as it has during the last 20 years. The phenomenon of heightened human mobility in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has drawn significant scholarly attention. As Stephen Vertovec (2010 a, b, c) points out, in addition to heightened human mobility in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there has also been a remarkable increase in diversity and diversification within migration flows. In this article I focus on indigenous transnational

migrants as important global actors within this trend towards increasing diversification of human migration.

My research on indigenous transnational migration, diaspora and cosmopolitanism centers on an indigenous community of Quichua-speakers from Northern Ecuador known as Otavaleños or Otavalans, with whom I have worked since 1995. Otavalans are among Ecuador's most traditional people in that they maintain in the twenty-first century their native costume, indigenous language, cultural practices, and ritual expression (Wibbelsman 2009). They are also among the most internationally traveled and cosmopolitan populations of Latin America, constituting an ethnic diaspora conservatively estimated at 70,000 people worldwide at the end of the twentieth century (Meisch 2002, Kyle 1999). David Kyle's 1993 survey of Pegucheño households (one highly mobile Otavalan community) indicated that 24 percent of families in Peguche had at least one family member who had traveled abroad at least once. Lynn Meisch's (2002 164) estimates for the end of the twentieth century indicate that approximately 4,000 Otavaleños were permanent transnational migrants, and another 6,000 traveled abroad for short-term trips (that is, 15 percent of the total Otavalan population at that time). This figure is conservative in light of higher numbers reported by other authors for Europe alone. For example Jeroën Windmeijer (2001) reports 5,000 Otavalans in Europe in 1992. Linda D'Amico (2011 167) writes that by 2000, with the deepening economic crisis, the number of Otavalan households affected by international migration had increased considerably and that a decade later it was, in fact, difficult to find a family not affected by emigration in some way.

Otavalans maintain patterns of repeat-return migration to and from destinations throughout the Americas, Europe, Russia, Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Australia. These journeys account for proliferating Otavalan businesses overseas and at home. They also account for growing numbers of Otavalan youths college educated abroad, Otavalan international professionals, increasing numbers of international and interethnic marriages, new generations of Otavalan children raised entirely abroad, and pockets of distinct yet recognizably Otavalan communities throughout the world. As I write elsewhere (Wibbelsman 2009 18) what conceivably began as a "trade diaspora" (Kyle 1999, 2000, Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999) has developed into a much broader array of Otavalan experiences and transnational opportunities.

One constant across this variety of experiences is that Otavalan mobility has led to a normalization of modern and historical travel as part of this community's identity. Otavalans travelers refer to themselves as *purijkuna*, *caminantes*, *viajeros* (wanderers, travelers). A recent documentary (APAK 2013) seems to have prompted the adoption of the term *mindaláe* (historical long-distance traveling merchant) in reference to twenty-first century indigenous migrants and to Otavalans more generally.

In this article I outline general thematic and theoretical considerations for my analysis of Otavalan transnational migration as part of a broader project. My initial ethnographic and theoretical incursions into this topic reveal two overarching emphases: 1) The premium Otavalans place on mobility and 2) the importance of the “politics and poetics of destination” (Habell-Pallán 2005). Each of these premises is generative of distinct theoretical perspectives along with their corresponding ethnographic challenges. Together they give us a better understanding of Otavalan transnational experiences and cultural change. In both cases, personal narratives highlight the extraordinary heterogeneity of experiences that have resulted from Otavalan migration.

Otavalan Mobility in the Past

It bears mentioning that geographical mobility among Otavalans is by no means a recent phenomenon. Frank Salomon (1986) has documented a thriving native economy in the northern Andes prior to the arrival of the Spanish, propelled by long-distance trade specialists known as *mindaláes*. In the 15th century, before the Inka invasion of the northern Andes, Caranqui inhabitants of the valley that is today Otavalo specialized in weaving and trade (See e.g., Parsons 1945; Salomon 1981b, 1986; Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999 13). As I write in *Ritual Encounters* (Wibbelsman 2009) drawing on secondary sources, *mindaláes* eventually enjoyed special privileges as royal weavers and merchants under the Inka, under local *caciques* (local lords), and subsequently under the Spanish Crown. *Mindaláes* from the Otavalo area persisted in their trade practices well into the 17th century in spite of heavy Spanish colonial tribute requirements. In Cayambe, a neighboring market town just south of Otavalo, Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999 123) reports that *mindaláes* show up in official registers as a distinct group as

late as 1782. Although Antonio Males (1989 96) (and Joanne Rappaport in a translator's note) identify mindaláes as an institution characteristic of northern Andean Ecuador, Salomon (1986 102-105) presents evidence of "merchant Indians" as part of a broader, interzonal economic and political articulation. Citing Collier and Buitrón (1949 163) and John Murra (1946 794), Salomon (1981b 434) affirms that in addition to traveling the north-south Andean corridor, before the European conquest or the coming of the Inkas, Otavalo weavers, for example, traded for cotton with people from the Amazonian area.

A recent documentary entitled *Mindaláe: Recuperando la Memoria Oral del Mindalae Kichwa Otavalo, Artesano y Comerciante Viajero Universal* produced by APAK (The Association of Audiovisual Kichwa Producers) traces this regional history and projects a broad interpretation of the term "mindaláe" onto modern Otavalan trade specialists and transnational migrants from the sending communities of Peguche, Quinchuquí, Agato and La Compañía. The documentary affirms the longstanding tradition of travel in the area and also exposes the connections between historical and modern Otavalan migration. To give some indication of the prevalence of international travel in these communities, Narcizo Conejo, who participated in the documentary, indicated that APAK collected dozens of interviews, only some of which were used for the project.

Individual narratives of Otavalan migration abound in the area. In the summer of 2014, I interviewed Humberto Muenala Maldonado from the community of Quinchuquí, for example, who offered his family's experience dating back to the late nineteenth century. Don Humberto recounts that his maternal grandfather, José Maldonado, who died at the age of 85 a little over 35 years ago, left Quinchuquí in search of land in the Oriente (the Amazonian area of Ecuador) at the age of 15. Don Humberto recalls that as a child he often heard his grandfather say, "*saliendo se consigue algo*" (one obtains something by leaving). It was around 1880 that José Maldonado and a friend, frustrated by their lack of access to land (since communal lands had fallen into the private hands of Hacienda Quinchuquí), first traveled to the Oriente. They had heard that people mined for gold there, so they went in search of gold and land. When José did not return in four years, his parents became concerned and went looking for him. They did not know exactly where he was, but they followed a path they had heard via word of mouth that

folks generally traveled. His mother recognized him passing through Papallacta (on the eastern slope of the Andes descending toward Amazonia). When she saw him he was wearing a *túnica* or as it is called in Quichua, a *cushma*, a sort of loose pant garment like a toga. He was carrying a spear made out of *chonta* (ironwood) and a basket supported by a band around his head. (Don Humberto shows me the *chonta* spear of his grandfather, now hung as a family heirloom on the wall of his home). In other words, José had adopted local Amazonian customs. José did not recognize his mother and as he passed, his mom hollered “are you not José?” Only then did he turn around.

José returned to Quinchuquí but undertook subsequent journeys to the Oriente. He developed an interest in medicinal plants from the Amazonian region and perfected his knowledge over the course of several years. He eventually married a girl from Chimbalo (just south of Peguche and Quinchuquí) and settled in Quinchuquí. He managed to buy land in Imbabuela, Rinconada and Uksha. But the men always left the women and the children and “went out to look for things” (“*salían a buscar cositas*”). On one of his trips to the Oriente he did take his daughter, Luisa Maldonado. They brought back toucan skulls for his medicinal purposes. “That was the story of my maternal grandfather,” says Don Humberto.

On the other hand, his paternal grandfather, Segundo Muenala, journeyed out of the community for commercial purposes. He did not have any lands. “Zero. Nothing,” says Don Humberto. He always thought about journeying beyond the community. He became a traveling salesman to Otavalo and Quito selling blankets his family made. Eventually he organized groups of about 12 *compañeros* who would take this merchandise on donkeys. “Having a donkey back then was like having a car,” says Don Humberto. They traveled through Otavalo to Mohanda and via Remachos, Malchinguí, El Arenal, Atahualpa and San Antonio, near Mitad del Mundo, to Quito. There were *tambos* (rest stations) along the way, and when they arrived in Quito, the buyers had food for the donkeys. At that time, the currency was real silver. Since he had no lands in Imbabura, he bought small parcels of land here and there along his commercial route.

That was the life in terms of commerce. But there were other excursions out of the community for the purpose of exchanging food. Don Humberto tells me that people referred to this as *vida mascay* (search for life). In these cases of food exchange, it was his grandmother,

Isabel Vega, who was most skilled. She would take salt, beef fat, and maize flour on trips to Zuleta, Minas, Urcuquí and Aloguro (which is behind Lake Cuicocha). His father who was only a child at the time would go with her. They would gather what was left in the hacienda fields (“*lo caidito recogían*”) and would stay with acquaintances along the way. Among indigenous people they would trade a little bit of salt for water; a little bit of maize flour for soup. Other people would give them bananas in exchange for something they had brought. This was in 1910 more or less, says Don Humberto, but they always traveled bringing back potatoes, *ocas*, things like that. This is how they fed the family. “These are the stories of our *taitas*, our grandfathers,” says Don Humberto.

“*El primer camino siempre era salir*” (the first option was always to leave). People left in pursuit of commerce and also in search of land and the exchange of food. But they also went in search of adventure and new things, says Don Humberto, in search of “*cosas buenas*” as his grandfathers used to say. It was simply part of the tradition.

Don Humberto’s family story adds significant depth to our understanding of indigenous migration out of the Otavalo Valley. First he is insistent in offering evidence that people from other communities, not just Peguche, have long established traveling traditions. (This was in reaction to APAK’s documentary and as a statement that more work needs to be done in other communities on a phenomenon that is wider spread than the documentary leads its audience to believe). His grandfathers’ stories also situate migration in historical context, challenging potential misconceptions that Otavalan mobility is a recent or modern phenomenon. His maternal grandfather’s story confirms historical accounts of mobility not just along the Andean corridor, but between the Andes and Amazonia. The story of both sets of grandparents comments on the different reasons for traveling out of the community and the diversity of networks people negotiated over vast distances—encounters with *sacharunas* (people of the Amazonian rainforest who helped them find shortcuts through the jungle, “*que ayudaban a cortar camino*,” in exchange for Andean blankets), mestizo buyers in Quito, acquaintances and *compadres* throughout the Imbabura area, indigenous and nonindigenous people along commercial routes (including the occasional run-in with thieves). It also contributes a gendered perspective that alerts us to early evidence of Otavalan women’s mobility and the key roles

their travels played in feeding the household. Most importantly, Don Humberto situates mobility as a tradition among Otavalans and provides glimpses of socialization at an early age into this lifestyle.

Part I: Otavaleños “On the Move”

Attention to Otavalans as conspicuous actors in historical migrancy and global mobility is important in disrupting stereotypes of Andean indigenous people as exclusively agriculturalist, sedentary and locally-bound, and recasting the identity of these ethnic communities as mobile, diasporic and cosmopolitan. Many studies on Ecuadorian migration have aimed to include indigenous people. However, their frameworks of analysis have tended to enfold indigenous mobility within general patterns of national population migration. As Alicia Torres (2009, 2010) points out, these studies have made important contributions to an understanding of national migration more generally, but their approach overlooks distinct circumstances surrounding indigenous migration that require a differentiated analysis. I situate the narratives I collected between 2000 and 2014 in the context of a growing body of ethnographic, historical and cultural geographical work that responds to the call by Torres and presents a more discerning perspective that affirms indigenous people as migrants with distinct reasons and methods for traveling, and unique networks and global routes for mobility. The nature of the regional and global exchanges Otavalans undertake along with their habits of repeat-return migration, the distinct legal and illegal migration paths of Otavalan mobility, the intensity of Otavalan travel and, as Don Humberto Muenala claims, the penchant toward going out into the world “*como parte de la tradición*” (as part of the tradition) sets Otavalan migration in historical and contemporary contexts apart from other sectors of the national population.

In spite of this corrective, in both popular and some scholarly conceptions the notion of indigenous people “on the move” remains somewhat of a novelty. In some cases, as part of a fascination with the compelling phenomenon of speed of travel in the context of modern technology and the dramatic flow of people, goods, capital and ideas, this has produced amazement at the fact that indigenous people move at all, not to mention at such breakneck

speeds. In these cases, the pace of mobility has come to stand (erroneously in my opinion), in and of itself, as an explanation for indigenous cosmopolitanism and as a conclusive statement about the indigenous migration experience in general. This emphasis on momentum has tended to downplay the importance of unique Otavalan experiences in different destinations as specific locations get lost in a kinetic blur.

In other more disconcerting instances, the novelty of indigenous people “on the move” has acquired either implicit or explicit connotations of people “out of place” (*fuera de su lugar*) (Whitten 1996 198). As Whitten (1996 209-211) goes on to explain, by way of these attitudes, people perpetuate the “structures of domination” that through rhetorical strategies of reification concretize properties and couple those properties in inextricable fashion with ethnic identities “as though physical features, genealogy, and heritage had some real correspondence among people, representations, and categories” (Whitten 1996 209).

As I outlined the idea of my project on indigenous transnational migration to a long-time friend, Pacífico Fichamba, he shared the following story: The wife of one of his brothers is from the United States. On one occasion when Paci expressed interest in travelling to the United States, she asked him why he wanted to go there, for what purpose? He answered that he wanted to visit Yellowstone Park. “But why?” she insisted. He told her that it was because this was the first national park that was established in the country. His sister-in-law persisted, “but why?” ...

Paci asked me, “Why is it that when foreigners express an interest in traveling, no one questions them, but when an indigenous person expresses a similar desire to see the world, there is an interrogation?” Pacífico is an environmental engineer. I have known him since 1995 and he has dedicated his life to the preservation of protected wildlife areas. He becomes passionate in his expression when he tells me about the blue green algae at Yellowstone National Park. It is the largest single organism in the world and it’s anaerobic! That’s why he wants to go; to see it for himself. He also aspires to see the Great Wall of China someday. His brother went there and also to the Caves of Jumandi.

I found it curious that Paci should mention the Great Wall of China and the Caves of Jumandi, which are near the town of Archidona in the Ecuadorian Oriente, in the same breadth.

But in doing so, he clearly conveyed his general wonder about the world and his desire to go see these amazing natural phenomena and feats of human engineering regardless of whether they were near or far, large or small, local treasures or world heritage sites. Through these anecdotes, Paci, who is no stranger to scholarly debates and is personally invested in ethnic identity politics, was quite incisively staking a claim about indigenous mobility and cosmopolitanism. Beyond this, he was troubling ethnic and class stereotypes, challenging reified categories, and shaking enduring hypostasized structures (as Norman Whitten would designate them) in an act of indigenous self-determination. He very clearly inferred in his sister-in-law's interrogation the intolerant opinion that indigenous people abroad were "out of place." Her unrelenting "but why...?" in fact signaled that the very notion of indigenous people as tourists was inconceivable to her. Paci was also perceptive about the running subtext of the conversation and through his personal example was challenging the preconception that when third world people do travel, it must be exclusively out of economic necessity.

His comments, were, of course, also directed toward me and intended as an unspoken suggestion for positioning my project in a way that did not overstate economic hardship as an impetus for transnational mobility and that took into account desire and curiosity among the motivating factors and personal reasons for Otavalan travel. Most importantly, Paci positioned himself in a field of potential and possibility that fundamentally redefined the relationship between ethnicity and mobility. In doing so he projected an emphatically broader representation of indigenous people from a native, self-determining perspective.

Other interviewees reiterated this point, conveying reasons rooted in individual desires for traveling that went beyond purely financial pursuits and asserting the prerogative to move about (and beyond that, the right to aspire to mobility or imagine themselves abroad prior to the actual act of traveling). Cesar Moreta, from Barrio Atahualpa in Peguche, for instance, has never traveled outside of Ecuador. When I asked him where he would go if he had the opportunity to travel, his face lit up and he responded without hesitation, "to see the North American Indians." During the San Juan and San Pedro festivals each year, he fashions his own costume. He likes dressing up as a North American Indian. Someday he would like to go see those cultures in the United States and Canada. What interests him the most is learning about

those cultures.

Antonio Caisa, on the other hand, has had plenty of travel experience as a musician and *comerciante*. He says that he saw traveling and the opportunity to discover other lands as something “*maravilloso*” in his youth. His love of *cumbia* music had always inspired his curiosity about Colombia. So when he had a chance to travel there, he went. That was his first of many international journeys. He tells me about the trials he faced living abroad and says he is fed up with that lifestyle. Nonetheless, someday he would like to travel again not for economic reasons but to “gather his steps” (“*a recoger los pasos*”) —to revisit the places to which he’s been and where he left so many memories both happy and sad, but all part of his life experience.

Each person I spoke with had very personal reasons for traveling or wanting to travel, some of which, like Cesar Moreta’s curiosity about Native American cultures or Pacifico Fichamba’s fascination with the blue green algae, are quite idiosyncratic. Combined, these narratives highlight the heterogeneity of motivations and objectives behind indigenous migration, interrupting analytical models that often default to assertions about economic precipitating factors for migration. Among the people I interviewed, several of them insisted, in fact, that the fascination with discovering the world was “*casi como la costumbre misma; la tradición*” (almost like the custom itself; the tradition).

My interlocutors consciously cast off biased external gazes that perceive ethnic minorities as inherently limited, disadvantaged, and therefore unable or unlikely to entertain aspirations or ambitions beyond their immediate circumstances. Paci, Cesar, Antonio, Don Humberto and without exception all of the people I interviewed had a positive self-perception that contrasted with nonindigenous people’s insistence (no matter how well intentioned) on the cultural, social and economic inadequacies of ethnic minorities. Otavalans I met from all walks of life embodied a disposition of openness, of readiness to conceive of broad prospects for themselves and their communities. I sometimes overheard Otavalans and foreign tourists in the open market of the *Plaza de Ponchos* sharing anecdotes about places they had both visited —conversations which unexpectedly put tourists on par with their indigenous counterparts in terms of their knowledge of the world and the privilege of international travel. These micro-

affirmations converge in generalized positive statements about an ethnic community poised squarely within ethnogenetic processes of historical consciousness and “reflexive awareness... of their ability to make situational and more lasting adjustments to the social orderings...” (Hill 1988 7).

Interviews with people who had not traveled highlighted in a particularly salient way that this process of ethnic self-determination begins not with the act of traveling itself, but rather with an ability to imagine oneself in a different set of possibilities. These individual aspirations are bolstered by a recurring statement that traveling the world is an Otavalan tradition. In this process, mobility and travel are recast as central to Otavalan identity and Otavalan values. As such, they provide a platform for jointly conceiving of a future (as well as a past and a present) that is not geographically bound and that projects Otavalans as protagonists (as opposed to incidental participants) in transnational mobility. Although perhaps a recent appropriation or reappropriation (triggered by the release of APAK’s documentary), it is significant that in Otavalo current use of the term “*mindaláe*” has exceeded its original historical and commercial connotations and become essentially interchangeable with “Otavalan”.

Akapana: The Whirlwind that Touches Down and is Gone Again

Travel and the fascination with global mobility is a topic of frequent conversation among Otavalans. The coming and going of *vijeros* (travelers), which sometimes involves returning home for less than a week before jet setting off to another destination, does highlight kinesis, momentum, speed. On a few occasions I heard travelers refer to themselves as *akapana* —a whirlwind that touches down and just as suddenly is gone again. David Kyle (2000) reports Otavalan travel to 23 countries at the end of the twentieth century and Lynn Meisch (2002) lists travel to 32 countries. Aside from these tallies, neither author provides ethnographic information on this impressive number of travel destinations. Kyle and Meisch do not even name all of the countries they enumerate. I was initially critical of the lack of ethnographic evidence to substantiate this claim about Otavalan mobility. However, in my own interviews I found myself jotting down numbers of destinations and frantically scribbling lists of countries —

Dominican Republic, Australia, Belgium, Germany, Finland, Portugal, Italy, Luxemburg, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, France, Norway, Russia, Japan, China, Singapore, United States, Canada, Spain, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, United Arab Emirates, Dubai, South Africa, Germany, Panama, Switzerland, Austria...— which travelers rattled off in no particular order and faster than I could write them down.

It became clear that the nature of Kyle's and Meisch's reporting was reflective of the character of local experiences and discourses on travel, which invariably emphasize the agility and alacrity of Otavalan mobility. This made me think back to an interview I conducted in 2001 with an Otavalan gentleman who was 75 years old at the time. An *acial* (whip) passed down through three generations triggered Taita Nicolás Andrango's memory, and in exchange for my purchase of this antique, he shared with me his recollection of the days of large haciendas in the Imbabura area. Taita Nicolás focused his reflections on the limitations on mobility people suffered in the time of the big haciendas. Hacienda Quinchuquí and Hacienda Pinsaquí were so enormous that they blocked access from the area directly north of Otavalo to the market town of Otavalo. In Taita Nicolás's words, "*mezquinaban el camino*" (they [meaning the hacienda owners] were stingy with the paths).¹ Getting to Otavalo across hacienda lands was a dangerous, difficult journey. Often the *mayordomo* (hacienda overseer) would catch people in transit and threaten them with this very *acial*. Taita Nicolás held the whip up to show me. The *mayordomo* would confiscate their hats or ponchos and force them to work for a day in order to reclaim these items and gain safe passage to Otavalo.² A distance of a few kilometers back then took a day or even two of perilous travel through unpredictable social terrain and unexpected geographical detours (Wibbelsman 2004).

This historical experience of restricted geographical mobility contrasts with the relative ease with which Otavalans travel today. A staff member of the Municipal Office of Planning and Development in Otavalo indicated that ethnic Otavalans are, in fact, more likely to be approved for international visas than nonindigenous applicants (2014 interview). Contemporary Otavalan mobility is a reflection of changing socio-political circumstances and ethnic economic empowerment. As such, there is a premium placed on mobility not just in terms of the ability to

move freely across physical distance but also because mobility is emblematic of social, political and economic changes.

Perhaps this notion of ready access to the world is behind the tendency among Quichua speakers to talk about place in terms of proximity and relative distance. Everywhere, regardless of whether it is an international destination or a local stop, is *chaygupi*, used interchangeably with *allacito no más* in Spanish (just over there) or *al ladito no más, aquí a la vultita* (right next door, just here around the corner). Use of the diminutive form (*ito, ita* suffixes in Spanish and *iku, gu* in Quichua) accentuates the impression of proximity. Moreover, rather than using the term “over there” (*chaypi* in Quichua, *allá* in Spanish) Otavalans tend to privilege the term “over here” (*kaypi* in Quichua, *aquí* in Spanish) even when signaling some place farther away. Combined with the diminutive, this discursive structure further accentuates a connotation of “nearby.” (Many times in my experience, however, *aquicito no más* on the local scale turned out to be 15 kilometers up the road!). Elsewhere (Wibbelsman 2009) I write about the conceptual maps (at variance with conventional maps) this emphasis on mobility and proximity generates among Otavalans who tend to conceive of places around the world as just around the corner and well within reach. In this conception, perhaps the Caves of Jumandi and Great Wall of China are not so far apart after all...

Indigenous Cosmopolitanism

For those who do not travel abroad, the world comes to them. In addition to approximately 145,000 foreign tourists who visit Otavalo annually (Meisch 2002 2), Otavalan travelers bring back impressions, experiences, souvenirs, pictures, videos, new forms of knowledge, fashions and different languages from abroad, all of which add to a cosmopolitan atmosphere among Imbaburan communities. Even for people who have never ventured farther than the limits of Imbabura province, the names of foreign cities roll off their tongues as easily as those of neighboring hamlets.

Increasing use of cellular phones and internet access in even the most remote communities contributes to the sense of worldly proximity and familiarity. While I was at my *compadres'* house in Ilumán Bajo we received regular calls from Switzerland and Spain. At the

homes of friends in Peguche, business calls from all over Latin America rang in on a daily basis. During my visit in 2014 it was clear that Facebook had become ubiquitous. Even the poorest households I visited asked me if I was on “*facebur*” to stay in touch and often gave me their “*eskype*” address as well, complicating any preconceived notions about obvious correlations among economic class, ethnicity and technology.

Even Otavalans who do not travel think of themselves as participants in the world economy, knowledgeable about and open to diverse cultural ideas, and connected to select global others through a sense of shared values. In other words, they see themselves as cosmopolitan. This native self-perception, moreover, is not contingent on travel, suggesting that Otavalans are cosmopolitan prior to being transnational. The sense of belonging to a universal community that is “at home in the world” fosters a confident disposition among Otavalans to travel around the globe without fear and with the anticipation of finding “*alguna cosita buena...*” Otavalan cosmopolitanism arguably results not from modern experiences in juxtaposition to traditional lifestyles, but rather from deeply held indigenous ideals. This suggests that rather than looking at Otavalan global mobility within the frame of cultural transformation in the throes of globalization, it may be pertinent to consider the Otavalan transnational experience within a frame of cultural continuity —as part of “*la tradición misma*”.

The social landscape Otavalans navigate has clearly shifted under the pressure of new means of travel and the flow of people, goods, information, and capital, producing new spaces of identity formation and changes in social interaction. However, the deeply-held value placed on mobility due to a history of restricted geographical movement, the way people talk together about distance in relative terms that render the world nearby, and the claim that traveling is a long-standing Otavalan tradition suggest that Otavalans conceive of mobility as something integral to their ethnic experience and collective identity. In this sense the emphasis on mobility itself (momentum over location) both among ethnographers working in the Otavalo area and Otavalans themselves keys us into native perspectives on migration. One important outcome of this outlook on migration is that in the blur of rapid displacements to and fro and in the midst of global circuits, transnational flows and social networks, the only place that remains in focus

and functions as a stable referent is Otavalo. As the point of departure, repeat-return and mythical homeland Otavalo serves as an anchor for indigenous migration experiences.

This, nonetheless, may be changing as Otavalan diaspora communities become more settled. New visa requirements, changing economic factors both in Ecuador and abroad, and a host of other limitations on migration have affected the agility of Otavalan travel in recent years. While the number of Otavalan migrants may have increased, the rate and frequency of repeat-return migration seems to have diminished since 2000-2001. As Otavalans set down more permanent roots abroad, their respective receiving countries take on increasingly prominent connotations of “home”.

Although Otavalans clearly constitute an ethnic diaspora in the sense that they maintain a strong connection to Otavalo as a homeland and, for the most part, aspire to return to Otavalo someday, for many Otavalans that day has been postponed indefinitely. My opinion is that sooner or later some Otavalans will have to reconcile their discourse on an ultimate return to Otavalo with their reality of permanent residence abroad.

While the emphasis on mobility provides some productive ethnographic insights, it tends to obscure others. Within this theoretical framework, the experience of migration, for instance, tends to become undifferentiated. “*Lo primero es salir...*” as Don Humberto’s grandfather declared —the important first step is to leave, regardless of where to...; simply to leave Otavalo. People comment that during the decades of the 1980s and especially the 1990s there was a “*fiebre de viajar al extranjero*” (international traveling craze or fever). The audacity to leave became an important right of passage for young Otavalan men and women. Their final destination depended on visas, tickets, letters of invitation, and often people did not know until the last minute what country they would travel to. In this process of simply going out into the world, the unevenness of Otavalan global travel was masked. At the time of their first travels young Otavalans came back with narratives of adventure and were received triumphant in their communities who bestowed upon them a new status as *viajeros universales* (universal travelers). Years later, however, these travelers confide that many of their experiences were not so heroic. They were often challenging, humiliating, frightening, dangerous. They generally refer to life abroad as a life of sacrifice and suffering. Within the gamut of migrant experiences,

I heard of pronounced differences in the experiences of men and of women, generational differences and individual differences. I heard of victims of human trafficking and of young Otavalans caught up in international narco-trafficking rings. I heard of police raids, confiscation of merchandise, deportations, sharing of tiny apartments with 15 other people, sleeping in cars in Europe in winter. People also talked about individual challenges of overcoming shyness or battling depression or alcoholism in a foreign land and without a support network.

As these personal accounts poured forth, it became evident that the thematic and theoretical generalizations based on the emphasis on mobility could only carry an understanding of indigenous transnational migration part way. A tapestry textured by different qualities of experience begins to emerge as individuals, specific destinations and personal narratives come into sharper focus.

Part II: The Politics and Poetics of Destination

People whom I initially met in Otavalo in 1995 have since traveled abroad. I now have Otavalan compadres, godchildren and friends in seven different countries including Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, the United States, Canada, Switzerland, and Spain. While they initially returned to Otavalo frequently as part of the Otavalan jetset generation, their return trips became less and less frequent and some of them eventually settled abroad semi-permanently. My godson from Chimbaloma who traveled to Chile with his family at the age of 13 is now enrolled in college and has a family of his own with an Otavalan wife in Santiago, Chile. The daughter of my compadres in Ilumán originally traveled to Switzerland with her husband in the late 1990s. They initially returned to Imbabura at least once per year with the intention of settling in Otavalo permanently in five years. After their second child was born they returned less frequently. They now have four children, all born in Europe. Both the parents and the children now have their official residence and/or citizenship papers. It seems unlikely that they will return to Otavalo, at least not until the kids are finished with their schooling. Eventually my compadres's second oldest daughter and son followed their sister to Europe. They now live in Switzerland and Spain. Anita, the second daughter, has not been back to Otavalo in over 14 years. Her daughter, who was born in Ecuador but left as a baby, does not speak Quichua. Anita

says she does not speak proper Spanish either since unlike her sister's children, her daughter does not have papers and can only attend public school in Valencia where they teach classes in Valencian, a dialect of Catalan. Walter, the brother, married a Swiss woman and has two daughters born abroad and now living in Otavalo with their foreign mother (while Walter remains in Switzerland). When they arrived in Ecuador, his daughters only spoke German. Now they are fluent in German and Spanish. All of us muse about meeting again someday in Otavalo, Europe or who knows the United States even. We stay in touch via long distance telephone calls, e-mail, facebook and skype. Along with compadres and friends living in other places, Anita and Walter often share their reflections on the experience of living abroad. While there are some common threads in the narratives of my compadres and friends overseas, each story is unique and personal; difficult to reduce to a generalization in the blur of global mobility or to an undifferentiated statistic on indigenous transnational migration.

The second part of this article builds on Michelle Habell-Pallán's (2005) attention to the politics and poetics of destination, which emphasizes the ways by which receiving communities shape the prospects of migrants. This analytical framework gains importance in the context of exploring global networking paths to specific destinations and gaining a better ethnographic understanding of increasingly settled Otavalan communities abroad. Beyond this, Habell-Pallán's focus tempers enthusiasms about accelerated global mobility, settling our gaze on the unique configurations of expression and experience that emerge *in* transnational sites. Olwig and Hastrup's (1997) and Homi Bhabha's ([1994] 2004) analyses of space as practiced place also cue us into issues of ethnic representation and the reconfiguration of Otavalan identities in distinct host countries. I center on contrasting experiences in different destinations to draw attention to factors that affect individual conditions of mobility, quality of experience, processes of re-imagining Otavalan communities and identities abroad, and the idiosyncrasies of intercultural communication and understanding in distinct societies.

Here, I provide a glimpse of three elements of Otavalan migration within the framework of the poetics of destination: 1) I present a collage of Otavalan travel destinations to highlight the nature of distinct global networking paths and migration routes; 2) I draw on ethnographic interviews with long-term Otavalan residents abroad to provide some perspective on Otavalan

diaspora communities and shifting identities; and 3) I focus on one example of Otavalan musical representation abroad in a context of pronounced cultural differences to demonstrate the unique theoretical insights and analytical approaches distinct destinations elicit. I anticipate that as my work progresses, different transnational sites will open distinct lines of inquiry and methodological consideration, alerting us to some of the challenges and limitations of transnational ethnographic research.

Collage of Otavalan Global Destinations

Within the existing literature, studies on Otavalan transnational mobility have focused primarily on migration to North America and Europe (Atienza de Frutos 2009, Caguana 2008, Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999, Cruz Zúñiga 2008, D'Amico 2011, Jokisch 2000, Jokisch and Kyle 2005, Kyle 2000, Lema Otavalo 2003, Maldonado Ruiz 2004, Meisch 1997, 2002, Miles 2004, Ordóñez 2008, Parsons 1945, Torres 2005, 2009, 2010, Torres y Carrasco 2008 Windmeijer 2001, among others). This body of work develops important themes and theoretical perspectives grounded in ethnographic studies in transnational sites. However, the insights they contribute cannot be easily transposed onto the remarkable number of Otavalan travel destinations beyond these geographical areas, for which there is little or no ethnographic record. A brief glance at assorted Otavalan travel destinations begins to reveal specific transnational routes and networking paths that influence migrant opportunities and expectations. This cursory overview also draws attention to explicit themes for analysis that emerge in each context.

Through the end of the twentieth century, the United States, Europe and other Latin American countries were primary destinations for Otavalan migrants. Linda D'Amico's (2011) recent ethnography on Otavalan women, ethnicity and globalization traces Rosa Lema's cultural tours in the 1940s and 1950s to the United States as a pathbreaking event for Otavalan entry into transnational travel and participation in global networks. These initial sites generated opportunities for formal invitations to performance groups, and later legal and illegal migration, and increasingly informal venues as sidewalk artists and crafts vendors. D'Amico writes that in the United States the Otavalan delegation was seen as a novelty. In some cases, as with the

World Fair, Otavalans were cast as exotic curiosities. However, from the native perspective, these tours were about establishing meaningful networks and about ethnic recognition and empowerment.

Spain became the next big destination once the United States began imposing stricter migration laws. D'Amico (2011 159) reports that until 1999 Spain had no visa requirements, facilitating travel to this country. Ecuadorians became, in fact, the largest migrant group in Spain in the late 1990s (Atienza de Frutos 2009). In Spain, Otavalans operate among a large Ecuadorian migrant community and, of significance, in the framework of a former colonial power. The number of Ecuadorian migrants to Spain and the historical ties between these countries has promoted bilateral agreements for migration policies and the protection of migrant rights. Within this complex social topography, Otavalans navigate the ambiguity of relating as citizens (sometimes for the first time) to the Ecuadorian state (or distancing themselves from these national affiliations), finding themselves united with other Ecuadorians and Latin Americans in the face of Iberian racism and historical condescension, but also dealing with entrenched prejudices among Ecuadorians themselves that have simply been transposed abroad. The themes that frame Otavalan migrant experiences in Spain prove to be exclusive to this colonial, postcolonial, national and transnational intersection.

Within Europe, other destinations and travel routes are subject to different themes and relational dynamics. Evangelical churches, for instance, have played a key role in facilitating Otavalan travel to Switzerland, especially from the area of San Pedro. These cases introduce themes of international religious organizations as economic and political mediators for migrants and religious conversion among Otavalans as a means to migration. As an outlet for the sale of high-end indigenous products, Italy has influenced craft design, Otavalan fashion trends, and architectural aesthetics in Otavalo. Otavalan diaspora communities in Italy and migrants returning from this country have contributed to changing status symbols among Otavalans modeled on European aesthetics and values. Arts and Humanities grants in Finland, Sweden and Norway have supported Otavalan cultural presentations and outreach projects, assigning a status of cultural ambassadors to travelers to those countries. Otavalans who have traveled there report that the Fins are like Otavalans themselves, *"tienen casi la misma cultura que la*

nuestra" (they have almost the same culture as ours). Impressions of Germany are generally not so favorable. Many Otavalans use adjectives like distanced, cold, unfriendly, unsympathetic to describe Germany, but they continue to travel there because sales are particularly lucrative. Increasingly open borders within the European Union have led to Otavalan seasonal migration within Europe.

Within Latin America, Chile offers an example of a relatively accessible market outlet for traditional Otavalan products. Shared cultural traits such as a common language and familiarity with Andean music and culture to some extent facilitate the initial entry of migrants both into the country and into broader transnational networks. It is a point of entry into global migration circuits for young Otavalan women in particular. Because Chile extends possibilities for secondary and college education with scholarship opportunities for young indigenous migrants, this transnational destination attracts the migration of entire families for extended stays. Relative proximity to Ecuador also renders Chile a site of intense individual repeat-return migration especially among single indigenous entrepreneurs.

In Colombia we find Otavalan communities with their own *cabildo* or town council signaling a long-established Otavalan presence in this country. Along with Chile, Colombia is a key point of entry into broader travel networks and opportunities. In spite of its proximity to Otavalo, Colombia fulfills the transnational conditions of a rite of passage for young Otavalans and is an especially important destination for first-time young Otavalan women travelers.

Venezuela hosts a large population of Otavalans (returning migrants could not estimate exactly how many except to say that there were "*muchísimos*"). Due to the recent economic downturn in Venezuela, this country has become a significant source of returning migrants from established diaspora communities back to Otavalo.

Among recent Otavalan migrant destinations, Australia extends the possibility of studying pioneering transnational paths. In South Africa, Otavalans manifested their presence as spectators for the FIFA World Cup Soccer matches in 2010 and again in 2014 in Brazil. Their turnout in the soccer stadiums not only attested to the scope of their global networks (and Otavalans' love of soccer) but also made a statement about their economic ability to participate in an international event of such high standing. A colleague doing research in Turkey in summer

of 2014 shared with me that the neighborhood in which he was living in Istanbul was home to an entire community of Otavalans since 2011. Rather than selling Otavalan handicrafts, they work as street hawkers side by side with Senegalese vendors along busy streets like Istiklal in the neighborhood of Galata or by the Bosphorus seaside, selling items acquired from local suppliers and mainly imported from India or Pakistan. Japan is a site of established Andean migration especially for musicians (Bigenho 2012). Korea, Southeast Asia, and especially China are sites of growing Otavalan migration. They are also countries with growing ethnic presence in Ecuador and in Otavalo itself.

Otavalans attending universities in Finland (film studies), the United States, Russia, Cuba (medical school) and Mexico (technical institutes) have established enduring ties to those countries and have also cultivated networks with other international students from various parts of the world. Scholarships in these countries enabled a flow of indigenous professionals back to Ecuador and in many ways prepared a generation of indigenous political leaders and activists beginning in the 1960s and 1970s.

This collection of destinations is by no means comprehensive and the fragments of information offered are not intended to stand as ethnographic evidence. Rather, this sketch simply aims to underscore how the focus on specific destinations can yield important insights into differentiated global trajectories and define themes for analysis as a plan for continuing research. It also bears mentioning that temporal vectors operate in a way that is similar to the phenomenon of location, circumscribing experiences in the same destination at different moments in time differently.

Diaspora Communities and Shifting Otavalan Identities

In hand with the attention to location, timing helps to illuminate the factors involved in increasingly permanent Otavalan communities abroad, but also recent waves of return. In 2014 I interviewed Nelson Conejo, an Otavalan migrant in his early 40s who was returning to Otavalo for the first time in 36 years. His parents had left Ecuador almost 40 years ago and made a life for their family in Venezuela. The recent economic downturn in Venezuela forced him and his brothers to return to Otavalo.

When I first met Nelson on the eve of the San Juan festival, his accent, his look, his gait, his height, his gestures all signaled that he was not from Otavalo. He did not look or act “indigenous.” In fact, both of us seemed to struggle as foreigners to emulate the shuffled dance steps that accompany the San Juan music and to navigate the formalities of festival exchanges of food, drink and conversation. He was trying to fit in as much as I was. This was the longest lapse in a case of return migration I had encountered. I was eager for an interview with him, which he willingly granted.

Nelson embraces his Otavalan heritage. He is completely enamoured with the culture and the traditions. He is enthusiastic about rediscovering long lost relatives and recovering his ability to speak Quichua (which he understands fully but has not had much practice speaking). He is optimistic about making a good life for himself in Otavalo. Yet when I ask him if he identifies as Otavalan or as Venezuelan, he hedges a bit and eventually answers Venezuelan. He recounts that when he entered into elementary school, Venezuelan children made fun of his braid. They picked fights with him on a regular basis. In order to avoid these problems, his parents cut off his braid. This decision initiated Nelson’s integration into Venezuelan society. When I ask him if he has met other Venezuelans in Otavalo, his face lights up and he tells me about the excitement of encountering some of his *compatriotas*, confirming beyond any doubt that he self-identifies as Venezuelan.

During my interview with Nelson we explored notions of “home” as a referent for identity and talked about markers of citizenship and nationality in the context of Otavalan diaspora communities. Our conversation touched on changing and adapting migrant identities, multifaceted transnational identities and impermanent ethnic markers. He also shared experiences that he felt had defined him personally, including his passion for mountain climbing. In the end, Nelson settled on the self-ascribed label “Otavalan-Venezuelan” in an attempt to resolve the tension of his dual allegiance, or then again, he thought, maybe “Venezuelan-Otavalan” might capture the way he identified more accurately... We left this discussion of “life on the hyphen” for a conversation in the future, but both recognized that an increasing number of Otavians find themselves precisely at this juncture of ethnicity, citizenship and nationalism.

These changing conceptions of Otavalan identity and experience also influence Otavalan ethnic representations abroad and performed identities for foreign audiences.

The Politics and Poetics of Ethnic Representation and Intercultural Exchange

Performance and representation of indigenous identities are central elements of Otavalan transnational excursions. In the context of indigenous crafts sales and Andean music production abroad, Otavalans have traditionally used their ethnic identity as an effective marketing technique. Transnational Otavalan migrants in general negotiate, to a greater or lesser extent and with varying degrees of success, the politics of performance, authenticity, representation, and cross cultural communication. This section focuses on Otavalan musicians in Japan as one example of how Otavalan performers navigate both real and perceived differences and affinities in foreign contexts. This example also provides a glimpse at the types of methodologies and analysis transnational research on Otavalan migration invites.

Japan is a receiving country that raises unique cultural challenges for Otavalan migrants, but also potential advantages in a society with conceptions of ethnicity, indigenous otherness, and musical aesthetics different than those of the West, and in many ways untethered by shared colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial histories. Cities like Nagoya (Honshū) and Kita-Kyushu (Kyūshū) have become important destinations for Otavalan musicians who receive formal invitations to perform at concert halls for huge fan bases. This experience contrasts sharply with that of Otavalan musicians in Latin America, Europe and North America, who often play for tips as sidewalk artists or at crafts fairs and festivals. As such, travel to Japan carries a different type of status among Otavalans (and for Otavalans among the Ecuadorian national population).

My analysis of Otavalan musicians in Japan highlights the range of sensitivities transnational performers manage in this unique cultural setting. One group's careful orchestration of their performances reveals how keenly aware Otavalan musicians are of subtle likenesses and contrasts vis-à-vis their Japanese audiences and how this particular group (Sisay) strategically operates within spaces of aesthetic detail, musical nuance, discursive registers and cultural gradation to bridge cultural distance and communicate with their public. Sisay's

performances call forth literature on the politics of representation inviting us into an interpretive realm of the use of strategic essentialisms (Spivak 1995) and anti-essentialisms (Lipsitz 1994), transcultural misrepresentations and representational excesses (Carter 2004), and the ways by which Otavalans intervene in representations of indigeneity already in circulation (Olwig and Hastrup 1997).

Sisay's performances in Japan provide a platform for raising questions about the reflexive processes and exchanges that take place within transnational scenes more generally. For instance, in their presentations, Sisay introduces a foreign audience to essential elements of Otavalan culture and indigenous performance aesthetics—an act that requires significant reflection about what those elements might be. They also deliberately confront stereotypes and strategically redefine images of indigenous people in ways that resist essentialisms. They establish musical footholds for cross cultural recognition at the level of musical aesthetics and performance style, creating spaces for generating the conditions for cultural understanding, or as Paul Carter (2004) writes, for the *desire* for communication across cultural difference. Finally, they involve foreign audiences as participants in the musical encounter creating a powerful, although temporary, group bonding experience.

I provide a more in depth analysis of Sisay's concerts in Japan elsewhere (Wibbelsman 2016). Here I offer just a couple of examples that illustrate the mechanisms by which Sisay accomplishes these performance goals. The following analysis derives from Sisay's "Native Roots Tour" performed for a packed performance hall in Kita-Kyushu in 2006.

Sisay opens its performance with an introduction that in strategic essentialist fashion depicts a widespread Andean ritual known as *tinkuy* and traditional festival characters known as *aya umas*. Immediately following, Sisay transitions into a stylized sound played on a combination of electric, Andean, and nontraditional instruments. The stage brightens spotlighting musicians who project a complex image of indigenous identity. While some members of Sisay wear the white pants and wool fedora hats characteristic of traditional Otavalan male attire, others don clothes and haircuts that reflect an adoption of certain aspects of Japanese fashion. Native American accessories including earrings, necklaces, and hair tassels are also conspicuous. The juxtaposition of "traditional" aspects of Otavalan culture and

nontraditional elements of Otavalan experience disrupts existing frames of reference about Andean identities. These conscious redefinitions of indigenous images abroad signal that identities are fluid, context based and multifaceted. They confound potential stereotypes of indigenous others and invite us to engage indigenous self-conceptions and representations in terms of “spectrums of identity” rather than fixed or singular identities (Lipsitz 1994). By operating effectively within performance micro spaces of intervals and transitions, Sisay musicians render brief musical changeovers in their performances occasions to insert their own cultural understandings and self-representations in a creative, but also positioned, cross cultural dialogue.

From this positioned perspective, Sisay moves on to build affinities with the audience. The group plays on shared minor pentatonic scales in Andean and Asian cultures, offering nuanced renditions of these scales throughout their performances to highlight the similarity for their Japanese audience. Sisay also takes advantage of linguistic similarities, such as the use of short vowels in Spanish, Japanese and Quichua to narrow the perception of cultural distance.

One song in particular presents a keen example for demonstrating how Sisay creates spaces of inclusivity and participation. "Churay Dance" draws on two key strategies: intense repetition and the use of gibberish. Each stanza of the song is accentuated by the lyrical tag “Churay! Churay! Churay!” This pronounced repetition facilitates quick integration of audience participation. Once Sisay introduces the song and establishes the repetition, singers on stage point the microphone toward the audience, inviting them to sing along "Churay! Churay! Churay!" The use of short vowels in Quichua and Japanese render it easy for Japanese audiences to pronounce the words and chime in. Even though audience members may be hearing the song for the very first time, this act of participation creates an illusion of knowing and sharing the song.

This sense of familiarity with the song and general participation is further accentuated in the chorus “holo ho ho holo ho ho ho...,” which is a nonsensical articulation in both languages, but which nonetheless plays a powerful role in the construction of a sense of inclusivity in Sisay’s concert. At this point, the audience does not even have to be invited or incited to sing along, they join in intuitively. As Harris Berger (2003 xvi, xv) signals in a chapter on the politics

and aesthetics of language choice and dialect in popular music, gibberish underscores the “phatic and self-expressive more than the communicative function of language.” Gibberish moves us away from the semantic realm of the referential content of words and toward a space of cross cultural “participation-through-doing that is socially meaningful and is at least partially constitutive of identity” (Berger 2003 xv). Repetitive use of simple Quichua phrases and gibberish in “Churay Dance” provide a new common “linguistic ground” for cross cultural engagement as a single musicking community in the suspended moment of the song. Building on Berger’s (2003) analysis, linguistic barriers melt away as comprehensibility at the level of the lyrics becomes secondary and other aspects of Sisay’s performance like rhythm, melody, body movement, semiotic expression, imitable behavior at the level of gesture and interpersonal interaction on stage, shared participation, and qualities like energy, joyfulness, spontaneity, inclusiveness and informality projected by performers on stage come to occupy the foreground.

In transnational context Sisay guides the audience through these spaces of ambiguity and possibility toward a disposition of openness by accentuating similarities and narrowing the distance between real or perceived differences. We see/hear how the group plays on recognizable shared musical, linguistic and cultural aesthetics that evoke what George Lipsitz (1994 75) calls “aesthetic families of resemblance.” By doing this, Sisay exposes the ways by which music enables unique processes of cultural approximation that gradually break down us/not us cultural binaries (and eventually distinctions between performers and audience members), replacing these arbitrary divisions with unifying metaphors of resemblance and proximity.

These brief examples provide some insight into how cultural and ethnic likenesses are creatively suggested and highlighted within performance micro spaces. They reflect Otavalan migrants’ ability to navigate complex symbolic and semiotic systems between cultures. Most importantly, they show how this particular group aims to create an experience of cross cultural community in their performances. In doing so, Sisay projects a unique brand of indigenous cosmopolitanism that emanates from the local and is presented to global audiences as an ideal model for society. From an analytical standpoint, the semiotic and musical analysis necessary to

overcome the lack of a shared symbolic system in this transnational context proves to be essential for rethinking local-global dynamics.

Conclusion

By way of attention to the politics and poetics of destination, this research can eventually fill gaps in the ethnographic record on Latin American migration. However, the aim of my study is not simply to add new destinations to this migrant map. Each transnational site raises theoretical and methodological challenges specific to the combination of unique host societies and distinct sending communities, challenging one-size-fits-all approaches to migration studies. At minimum this work underscores the need to differentiate indigenous migration from general population migration. Beyond this, the study brings to the surface the heterogeneity of experiences among indigenous migrants themselves, including a study on generational differences within the Otavalan diaspora. Perhaps the most exciting theoretical suggestion that emerges from this research relates to indigenous cosmopolitanism. This study situates Otavalan identities as modern and cosmopolitan not in juxtaposition to traditional lifestyles, but as emanating from deeply held indigenous values. Rather than looking at Otavalan global mobility within the frame of cultural transformation, the ethnographic evidence points toward an exploration of Otavalan transnational experiences within the frame of cultural continuity.

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Notes

¹ *Taita* is a title of respect and affection combined either with first or last name when addressing an older indigenous man. It literally means father. The corresponding female title is *Mama*, mother. Young adults are generally addressed respectfully as *tio* or *tia*.

² See Salomon (1981: 442) for additional background and description of coercive methods used by hacendados and townspeople to extract labor from indigenous people.