

### **The Construction of Migration Projects. A Study Based on Cases of Migrants from Tarija (Bolivia) to the Northwest of Argentina**

### **La construcción de proyectos migratorios. Un estudio a partir de casos de migrantes tarijeños y tarijeñas con destino al Noroeste argentino**

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#### ABSTRACT

The present article examines the construction of the migration project of immigrants from rural areas in the department of Tarija, Bolivia, whose destination is the agricultural labor market in the Northwest of Argentina. This paper aims to analyze the impact of push and pull factors on the construction of male and female migration projects. To achieve this objective, an ethnographic methodological strategy was used based on in-depth interviews.

*Keywords:* 1. migration project, 2. push and pull factors, 3. gender system, 4. Tarija, 5. northwest Argentina.

#### RESUMEN

El presente artículo estudia la construcción del proyecto migratorio de inmigrantes procedentes de áreas rurales del departamento de Tarija, Bolivia, cuyo destino es el mercado de trabajo agrícola del noroeste argentino. El objetivo es analizar la incidencia que tienen los factores de expulsión y atracción en la construcción de los proyectos migratorios masculinos y femeninos. Para cumplir dicho objetivo optamos por una estrategia metodológica etnográfica, con base en entrevistas a profundidad.

*Palabras clave:* 1. proyecto migratorio, 2. factores de expulsión y atracción, 3. sistema de género, 4. Tarija, 5. noroeste argentino.

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## INTRODUCCION

This article is part of a long-standing migratory phenomenon that links Bolivian origin migrants with the agricultural labor market in Argentina. More precisely, the Argentinian Northwest (NOA), considered the second destination of these migrants, after the Pampean Region. Generally, the regionalizations usually incorporate the provinces of Jujuy, Salta, and Tucumán into the NOA. In some cases, also the province of Santiago del Estero, although Bolivian migration has been particularly strong, especially in the first three provinces.

Until the first decades of the twentieth century, the NOA was the first destination for Bolivian migration; from then on, and more specifically since the 1960s, the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires became the principal destination for migrants. However, the NOA continued to represent one of the main places of arrival for this migration. In this region, Bolivians were articulated with activities that require abundant labor and whose labor markets are characterized by having high levels of precariousness and informality.

Until the mid-20th century, Bolivian migrants were linked to that region as workers mainly in sugarcane and tobacco production. From the last decades of the twentieth century, their presence in the horticultural labor market stands out. Concerning this activity, certain studies observed that these migrants' insertion has been naturalized or justified by racializing and ethnicizing discourses and practices (Ataide, 2017).

The relationship between Bolivian migrants and horticultural production for fresh consumption is not exclusive to the NOA; rather, it constitutes a phenomenon that has been present in different areas of the country since the late 1980s. Concerning this topic, there is much research, mainly focused on the places of destination of migrants, particularly in workspaces. Studies on this subject conducted by Barsky (2015), Benencia (1997, 2006, 2009, 2012a, 2012b), García (2009) and Pizarro (2012, 2014 & 2015a & 2015b) among others, stand out.

In this article, we focus on the construction of the migration project, seeking to understand how migration was conceived, investigating the main explanations that migrants elaborate on their decision to migrate, mainly making visible the differences between male and female migration projects. In this sense, the objective of this article has been to analyze the context of migration and the operation of the gender system in the place of origin and its influence on the construction of the migration projects for migrants.

With this objective in mind, we analyzed male and female migration projects of men and women from Tarija of peasant origin, who began their migratory trajectories between 1960 and 2015 and were articulated mainly —though not exclusively— with the NOA agricultural labor market, and since the end of the 1980s, especially in the horticultural production of the province of Salta. Concerning the research methodology, we have opted for a qualitative methodological approach and an ethnographic strategy, based on in-depth interviews. It

should be clarified that the analysis is based on the reconstruction that the migrants themselves make of their history; the analysis is retrospective and is mediated by the subsequent migration experience.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: MIGRATION PROJECTS AND CONTEXTS, AND GENDER SYSTEM

Lara Flores (2010) used the migration project concept to understand the social reproduction strategies developed by low-income families of seasonal rural workers. Spatial mobility is a common practice that links its members to wage and domestic labor. As for Bendini, Radonich, and Steimbregger (2012), they consider that the concept of the migration project:

[...] expresses the family initiative according to their socioeconomic position and the reproduction strategies where spatial displacements are registered and configured, while revealing historical patterns of family and spatial organization, life and work strategies developed by families more or less deliberately (Bendini, Radonich, & Steimbregger, 2012, p. 28).

Concerning the elements that influence the construction of migration projects of Bolivian migrants of peasant origin, we observe certain “expulsion factors” such as the lack of job opportunities and difficulties for the socio-economic reproduction of families, among others. Also, “attraction factors” in the destination, such as employment opportunities, improved living conditions, the approach to the modern urban way of life, etcetera.

Certainly, the information that compares origin and destination is usually transmitted through the stories of the migration experiences of relatives or countrymen. These stories are loaded with meanings, perceptions, and emotions and are added to the community or society’s cultural heritage. In this sense, we return to the idea of *migratory habitus*, coined by Hinojosa Gordonava (2009) and used to explain people’s mobility within what we now know as Bolivia, as a knowledge of life that allowed and allows a better and more sustainable use of natural resources. Rivero Sierra (2015) also stands out in his research on Bolivian migration in the province of Tucumán, Argentina, what he defines as the migratory culture of Bolivians, indicating the need to analyze:

[...] the social transformations that have taken place —and continue to take place— within the emigration communities. On the one hand, as a result of the generalized incorporation of the migration practice among its members and, on the other, because of the transversality with which it affects both those who leave and those who stay (Rivero Sierra, 2015, p. 238).

What in turn is part of what Cassanello (2014) defines as “collective memory” of places of origin.

These factors constitute a general context in which a migration project can occur. However, the construction of the migration project is crossed crucially by the gender system

that operates in the places of origin (Ariza, 2007). In this research, the gender system is understood as “the set of practices, symbols, representations, norms and social values that societies elaborate from the anatomo-physiological sexual difference” (De Barbieri, 1992, p. 114):

[...] gender can be conceived as part of a habitus, that is, as part of the set of durable and transferable dispositions of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and actions of all society members, when shared, are imposed on any agent as transcendent. Consequently, people’s practices are not free since habitus generates and organizes principles of these practices. However, they are not completely determined by the fact that habitus is dispositions, and as such, they do not prevent the production of different practices. Therefore, the characteristics of the gender system can be questioned and reinterpreted — to varying degrees— in the course of new experiences or conjunctures, such as migration (Rosas, 2013, p. 115)

Within this system, masculinity and femininity are considered as the two primary socio-cultural differentiation of gender constructions. Specifically, hegemonic forms of femininity and masculinity are built, and the relationships between the two are also defined or shaped (Rosas, 2013). For this reason, gender has a relational character since it is not possible to think of the world of women separately from that of men, and most of these relationships contain inequalities to the detriment of women (Ibid.).

We understand that inquiring about the incidence of the gender system in the construction of migration projects requires considering the relationships established within the peasant households of Tarija. These units constitute the co-residence environment in which its members share the daily maintenance tasks, including consumption and the reproductive organization of subsequent generations (Harris, 1986). In particular, thinking of these domestic units as a space for negotiation and unequal power relations, where relations reflect the various ways in which the sexual division of labor operates within them and, therefore, where gender commands are produced and reproduced.

According to Harris (1986), peasant households have traditionally been analyzed within the patriarchal ideology since the idea that men distribute work, negotiate contracts and harvest prices, rent land, or other properties, was naturalized. In this way, men’s control over the rest of the family was conceived as “natural.” Meanwhile, women were thought of within the reproduction context, conceiving their tasks as limited to meet the basic needs of the domestic unit (food, rest, cleaning, clothing). Women’s roles as natural caregivers of children and the elderly were also naturalized; they were excluded from the productive sphere in the same way.

In short, this ideological perspective placed the man in the role of the family’s breadwinner and the woman as the one who organizes, manages, and ensures the social

reproduction of the domestic group. Therefore, for men, symbolic capital and social prestige come into play outside the family doors (Pedone, 2008).

This way of conceiving gender roles and relations within domestic units influenced the way of observing migratory movements. Consequently, until the end of the twentieth century, scientific production on migration was marked by its economic and androcentric nature (Herrera, 2011; Gregorio Gil, 1998). The research described women as separated from the labor sphere, or as if they were irrelevant to it, and therefore, they were not a leading part of the migratory event (Ariza, 2007). Because of this, migration analyses concealed migrant women due to the widely shared assumption that they (and children) only migrated to accompany or reunite with husbands/fathers (Mahler & Pessar, 2006).

The feminist critique of this way of analyzing migration gave impetus to studies that linked gender and migration. In the late 1990s, some studies reported the so-called quantitative and qualitative feminization of migrations. The first made visible the increase in migrant women in certain migratory flows, while the second, qualitative feminization, raised criticism of the androcentric vision of the phenomenon. On this point, Rosas (2013, p. 132) noted that, in principle, this qualitative feminization was not caused by greater equality between men and women; rather, it is due:

[to the] deepening of social inequality and the deterioration of the labor market in the places of origin, produced by the processes of productive restructuring and by the economic opening that, in turn, promoted negative effects on the quantity and quality of the jobs for women and men (Rosas, 2013, p. 132).

Within this framework, it was of interest to contribute to studies that link gender and migration, analyzing the male and female migration projects of peasant migrants from Tarija bound for the NOA agricultural labor market. Particularly, taking into account how the contextual conditions (expulsion and attraction factors) operated and how these are articulated with the masculinity and femininity commands of their places of origin.

## METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used for a methodology and an in-depth interview as a data collection technique.<sup>2</sup> Seven male migration projects (Carlos, Gerardo, Bertoni, Imar, Raúl, Emanuel, and Ranulfo) and five female ones (María Ester, Natalia, María, Juana, and Beatriz) are analyzed. The selected cases have a similar origin since they are part of peasant families from different rural areas of the department of Tarija, Bolivia: San Jacinto, San Andrés, Tolomosa Grande, and Iscayachi. In addition, the interviewees began their migratory trajectories between 1960 and 2015. They were articulated mainly —although not

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<sup>2</sup>Throughout the paper, we use pseudonyms to protect the identity of our interviewees.

exclusively— with the NOA agricultural labor market. Since the end of the 1980s, in the horticultural production in the province of Salta, especially in the municipality of Apolinario Saravia.

The reconstruction of the migration projects was carried out by the analysis of the in-depth interviews with migrants, mostly between 2012 and 2017 in their places of origin, destination, and sometimes in both.

In the places of origin, the fieldwork was developed in February (2016 and 2017), when migrants returned temporarily to visit their families. This visit coincided with Bolivia's carnival, a time that seemed valuable to our interviewees. This festival concludes at the end of February when the migrants returned to the places of migration, which happens at the same time as the beginning of the tasks in the horticultural farms (preparation of the land, greenhouses, and seedlings) and the children's school year in Argentina.

In the destination places, the interviews took place mainly in Apolinario Saravia, Province of Salta, specialized in horticultural production, with a significant presence of workers and producers of Bolivian origin. The interviews were conducted at different times of the year at work sites, both on horticultural farms and home.

Gerardo and Ranulfo were interviewed only in their places of origin since they have permanently returned. The analysis of an interview with Roberto in Iscayachi, Bolivia, was also incorporated. Although he did not migrate, his father and children did. For their part, Imar, Gerardo, Ranulfo, María Ester, Natalia, and María were interviewed only at the destination. However, we also met with relatives of María, Carlos, and Raúl in their places of origin. Finally, Bertoni, Emanuel, Juana, and Beatriz were interviewed in their places of origin and the places of the migration destination.

### *Male Migration Projects*

Migrations from the current Tarija department to the NOA have a history that precedes the creation of both states (Argentina and Bolivia, respectively) (Hinojosa Gordonava, Pérez Cautín, & Cortez Franco, 2000; Pacceca & Courtis, 2008). Even the long history of Bolivian migration to the NOA can be recognized in other investigations (Reboratti, 1996; Nicola, 2008; Sassone, 2009, among others). Its continuity is confirmed in the narrative of the migrants interviewed.

In all cases, the interviewees had relatives with previous migration experience to the NOA region. For example, within the domestic unit (father, mother, or siblings) or the extended family (such as uncles, aunts, or cousins). Likewise, some recalled their own experiences during childhood as companions in their fathers' and mothers' migration.

These relatives were linked to the seasonal agricultural labor market, mainly —although not exclusively— with sugarcane production in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy. Certainly,

the stories about migration experiences circulate in the communities of origin, incorporating them into their collective memory (Cassanello, 2014).

According to Cassanello (2014, p. 74), “the stories of temporary and permanent migrants who settled in different parts of northern Argentina played a central role in propagating information and the emergence of migrant networks.” Furthermore, this is part of the context in which the interviewees build their migration projects.

For example, Carlos, 57 years old, born in Iscayachi, said that as a child he accompanied his parents who migrated seasonally to work in Ledesma, a sugar-producing company located in the province of Jujuy:

[...] Yes, in the past, they [my parents] worked in Ledesma,<sup>3</sup> in the sugarcane [fields]. As the years passed, the business started to go a little bad. I don't remember. I was in Ledesma as a child with my parents. Well, they left for Bermejo, that's in the department of Tarija and there, we produced and grinded sugarcane [...] (Carlos in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, April 18, 2013).

Roberto, 60 years old and born in Iscayachi, told the story about his father's traumatic experience in Argentina, which affected him in such a way that he preferred to remain in his homeland, at the risk of migrating:

My father migrated temporarily to Argentina to work harvesting sugarcane. Working conditions were bad, he ate little and worked hard. One day he got sick, he got very sick and he died. Oh! You don't know how complicated it was to bring him, how much it cost us to bring his body! he tells us (Roberto in Iscayachi, Tarija, field notebook, February 11, 2016).

In this excerpt of the interview, we can recognize how the lives of those who stay and do not migrate, as Roberto, are crossed by the experience of other migrants.

However, although neither Roberto nor his wife migrated, their children did. For him and his wife, including the rest of the interviewees, the explanation of why they migrated focused first on the context of origin they characterized as expulsive. By integrating a peasant economy that could not support all the domestic unit members, some migrated temporarily or permanently. Consequently, the migratory practice made it possible to reduce the burden on the domestic unit, reducing the number of people reproduced.

This context of origin, characterized by various limitations in the reproduction of peasant units, is expressed by Roberto. In his story, he compares the productive system of Iscayachi, noting the scarcity of water and land and the abundant agriculture in Argentina:

[...] We all sow like this. The land we have is small. It's not like Argentina. Oh! Argentina is pampa! It has plenty of lands; not here. Here, there are parts with no more rain. There's no water. When it rains there's production. [...]

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<sup>3</sup>A city in the province of Jujuy.

But if it's freezing, no. It's worse. We're sad. Young people are already going to Argentina. Most of them are. When it's freezing, they leave. After the Carnival, they leave [...] Here we have land, I have two hectares, each one of us does, that's good, that's good. Right now, we have barley, wheat, beans, sometimes there are problems [...] with water when there is drought [...] (Roberto in Iscayachi, Tarija, personal communication, February 11, 2016).

According to his and his children's story, the domestic unit was always sustained based on some crop production and animal breeding, whose products were used for self-consumption. The little surplus was sold or exchanged for other products for family consumption. The domestic unit's income was also complemented by the sale of other products, as in Roberto's family, who had the income from the sale of bread made by his wife, Francisca.

For his part, Gerardo, a native of Tolomosa Grande, 60 years old and a lifetime working in agriculture in different parts of Argentina, told us that the lack of land was a determining factor in constructing his migration project. Precisely, the distribution of land by inheritance between the brothers did not allow the reproduction of families by the small size of the plots:

Seeing that we were many and there wasn't so much land, you know it's not enough for everyone and you have to get out and look, as many who left to work to other places. When you're young, you have to leave. At seventeen years or so, I was already going to Argentina. To the province of Salta and Jujuy. [...] Other older brothers were going ahead, they took us with them (Gerardo in Tolomosa Grande, Tarija, personal communication, February 10, 2016).

In Bertoni's case, a 35-year-old native of Iscayachi, his migration project focuses on the attractiveness of the destination. Like the rest of the male migrants, Bertoni made his migration project a reality by integrating into other men's migratory network. Certainly, these other men with previous migration experience had information about the trip and possible work destinations. In the following fragment, the interviewee refers to his expectations regarding the trip to Argentina, built from the stories of other migrants:

Yes, friends from over there, cousins from my community. Most of the cousins were coming, going, and coming. They said that Argentina is very beautiful. Life's good over there! It's nice because you come to work, some bosses treat you well here. They don't make you suffer from food. They take good care of you [...] Most of them also encouraged me. The first time he encouraged me to come it was my brother-in-law, he was already coming, my sister's husband, who passed away. I dared to come with him at the age of seventeen (Bertoni in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, communication personal, September 13, 2015).

Carlos also narrated the following: "I became young. I came [...] here (*talking about Salta*) in 1981" (Carlos in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, April 18, 2013, italicized words are ours).



Carlos emigrated with his brother for the first time when he was 21 years old. They made circular migrations from his homeland to the north of Argentina to work in agriculture, where he stayed for a few months and then returned to Bolivia. After three years of migrating under this modality, both Carlos and his brother decided to undertake a different migration project with their partners who lived in their places of origin. On that occasion, both planned to settle permanently in Argentina. This migration, which associated two new families, two couples without descendants, was made possible through the information and contacts established by a brother-in-law who worked in Ledesma.

Just as Gerardo, Carlos and Bertoni, three other cases, Imar (30 years old, a native of San Andrés), Raúl (who died at 28 years old, from Iscayachi) and Emanuel (20 years old, also born in Iscayachi) began their migration experience when they were single, between 14 and 22 years old, together with older brothers or uncles.

Likewise, we have identified that several interviewees (such as Carlos, Imar, and Raúl), after several years of circular migration with other men, undertook a new migration project with their partners constituted in their places of origin. This new migration project was different from the previous one, as it consisted of settling permanently in Argentina with their partners with whom they began to work in agriculture together.

Ranulfo's case is different because he began his career in 1984, at the age of 22, when he was already living with Elsa, his wife. According to him, at that time in Tolomosa Grande, locals or people from other areas of Tarija recruited eight to ten young men to work in Argentina. Therefore, the interviewee got to know several places in Argentina, where he stayed for a few months. Sometimes he stayed for a whole year and sometimes two years until he returned to Bolivia again. Ranulfo's case also differs from the rest because he does not migrate with Elsa. After several decades of migrating seasonally to Argentina, he decided to stay permanently in Bolivia (Field notebook, interviews in Tolomosa Grande, Tarija, 13 de February 2017).

In all the male migration projects analyzed above, the difficulties of peasant families' social reproduction in their places of origin are present. These difficulties are explained by the scarcity of land and water, the adverse climate, and the lack of markets, all of which become the "naturalized" option of migration. Particularly in men's cases, this context of adverse origin is articulated with specific masculinity commands that make it possible to explain migration at certain ages.

Between the ages of 14 and 22, men "become young," which seems to indicate a change of stage in the life cycle. Men stop being children and become young men, so they must fend for themselves; they have to "get out and look," and that means migrating, going where they can find work.

On one occasion, interviewing Francisca in Iscayachi, she explained the migration of her children as follows: "Yes, they leave, they become young and they leave. It's because we

don't have much work here" (Francisca in Iscayachi, Tarija, personal communication, February 13, 2016). Her story as a mother was relevant for the analysis because the family is considered one of the main areas where gender commands are reproduced (Mallimaci Barral, 2012; Pedone, 2008).

Another question that arises from the interviews is that, for the most part, men began their migratory trajectories being single. In these cases, migration was not explained by the command to support their families as breadwinners, but rather by supporting themselves in economic terms and, as a consequence, alleviate the family burden. In some way, migration is always collaborative with family survival (Mallimaci Barral, 2012). In some cases, after several years of migrating seasonally, these men started a new migration project together with the partner established in the place of origin. This new migration project differs from the previous one because its objective is to work in agriculture together with their partner and to settle permanently at the destination.

In some cases, such as Ranulfo's, men migrate after forming their domestic units at the place of origin and do not undertake this migration project as a couple. They migrate under the logic that women are part of the family's care network, reproducing their identity within the household, while men do so based on their role as the breadwinner of the domestic unit. This logic is explained by the social division of labor, which enables men to go out and seek paid work, freeing them from the reproductive work that usually falls on women (Rosas, 2013). We will look into this in the next section.

### *Female Migration Projects*

Next, we address the migration projects of María Ester, Natalia, and María. These women have some similarities; the men with whom they had a marital relationship in their places of origin migrated seasonally to work in the production of sugar cane or tobacco in the NOA while they remained in Bolivia. After some years of migrating under this modality, the men built a new migration project to settle permanently in Argentina with them. Then, María Ester, Natalia, and María shaped their migration projects together with their partners.

María Ester, born in Iscayachi, aged 60 at the time of the interview, said that in the area where she grew up, in Bolivia, men were the ones who migrated to Argentina, while women remained caring for the children. We can infer from her story the existence of what we understand as *habitus* or migratory culture, in which men migrate as a reproduction strategy of the customary peasant domestic unit, responding to the previously mentioned sexual division of labor (Harris, 1986):

[...] we were farmers, we just produced there [...] Years before, my father came to work here in the land clearing sites, he says he watched the machines. He says he came for six months, of course, as any family does, some children are born there, come back and come again [...] I remember

a little about what he told us [...] And he worked for the season and then sometimes went to see the family [...] (María Ester in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, May 22, 2016).

María Ester begins her migration at age 22: “I came with him, with my husband [...] He had already come” (María Ester in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, May 22, 2016).

For most of the women whose trajectories we analyze, it is the family project itself that justifies their migration and is articulated with the difficulties or limitations of a context of origin, which we can characterize as expulsive:

I didn't want to live there, for me it's kind of cold, Iscayachi and Tarija. When we lived in Bolivia, the presidents [gave] no help to raise the children. I saw that many children died because they had no remedies, lack of [health] care, vaccines. I used to say to my husband, I don't want to have children here, we don't have any help. When it froze there was no money and we, a couple who wanted to have a family, there was nothing [...] We lived there for a year, and one time in those months, my sister-in-law, her husband —[he] grew up in Perico [a city in the province of Jujuy]— set up the trip, “I'm going to Argentina,” and Rodríguez [talking about her husband] talked with him, he says “I'm going too” [...] And we have been here since 1984, I think [...]. (María Ester in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, May 22, 2016).

However, the interviewee also raised a different point concerning an individual migration project, which she could not fulfill. This project came along while she was residing in the paternal/maternal home and was single. In her story, we recognize how patriarchy operates by controlling women within families. María Ester precisely mentions that she wanted to migrate to Argentina. However, one of the men who were part of her family, her older brother, did not authorize her because he considered that migrating was different from what her family expected for her. (Harris, 1986):

ME: Uh! So beautiful to me, I dreamed of coming here. To my first older brother, I used to call him “young dad.” He was cuddly. I called him “young dad,” besides my father [...] he grew up working here when he was young. He came and went when he was single.

S: And what did he say to you?

ME: “It's nice, my child,” he said, “but I can't take you, I can't say ‘let's go my child’”; but when I was sixteen, I told him “take me, take me!” But no, “no my little girl, no little sister, look, you have a duty to look after my mother, my father. You have to take care of them, you have to look after them, how am I going to take you? You're going to like the place, and you're going to forget about mother, so no, I can't take you” “Take me!”

S: And what did you imagine?

ME: That it's nice to work, a nice, hot place, nice. There are things, there's money, there's meat, at your door, there are vegetables, there's everything, but you have to work. I told him to take me, but he didn't want to (María Ester in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, May 22, 2016).

In this migration project, the idea of a dreamed place was present, of a destination where she could find what did not exist in her place of origin. Nevertheless, also in that memory, gender conditionalities appear. María Ester, due to her condition as a woman, had an assigned role in her maternal/paternal family: taking care of her parents. A role that would be enunciated by her older brother, a man with authority in her life, so much so that she called him "young dad."

María Ester managed to migrate when she was part of her family project, with another man, as part of a marital relationship. Pizarro (2015a) argues that for many Bolivian women, the decision to migrate and leave their homes is subject to their male relatives' authorization. In most cases, the author states that women's migrations were associated with the decisions of their husbands, fathers, or brothers and that they could only migrate after obtaining the support, permission, or authorization of a male relative.

Another case is that of Natalia, born in Tolomosa Grande, who at the time of the interview was 40 years old and had been living in Argentina for more than 20 years. Like María Ester, Natalia also migrated within the framework of a couple and work project. Certain conditions stand out in her story that can be characterized as expulsion from the place of origin. However, the interviewee also acknowledges that her decision was associated with "follow in her husband's footsteps":

S: How did you get to La Plata [capital of the Province of Buenos Aires]? How did you go from Tolomosa to La Plata?

N: I hooked up young, I had my husband, who was a worker, like that. A boss showed up, told him "well, let's go to Argentina" and he came later. And then I came, [...] I decided to follow in his steps, to go with him.

S: He proposed it to you?

N: Yes, he told me how the situation was. We didn't have much, unlike today, kids are born with a silver spoon in their mouth. At that time, people who had much were very rare, very rare, [...] it was hard (Natalia in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province; personal communication, September 13, 2015).

In short, what is recognized so far is a major bearing on the expulsion factors from the context of origin since they appeared in all the analyzed stories. To what extent did migration reduce the problem of the reproduction of peasant families in their places of origin?

None of the cases analyzed in this research account for the existence of remittances. However, the migrants' help to the relatives of the place of origin was verified through the transfer of goods, which consisted of non-perishable food.

We believe that the migration of peasants from Tarija to Argentina can be thought of as a way of alleviating the family burden (fewer mouths to feed and less land to divide) precisely in large families that barely support themselves with their economy of peasant subsistence. In this context, the men and women who migrated together favored the subsistence of each of their domestic units at the place of origin while forming a new domestic unit at the place of destination.

The case of María, 38, born in Iscayachi, responds to migration due to family reunification. This is how she described that context of origin from which she moves away:

M: [...] as peasants [...] we had more or less one hectare of land. Well, we produced there. That supported my mother, my father, and twelve brothers [...] They all worked [...] my mom worked with my dad, and we, as we were kids [we worked] in the fields, breeding sheep, goats. And that was for our consumption, of course, because it was not enough to sell. With such a big family, imagine that. To have enough for the year, because there's only one sowing each year. So, people come here, but before they came a lot [...] my father sowed and with that he made it through the year. Moderating himself.

S: What did you sow?

M: Potato, pea. When it doesn't freeze, there's production, but when it freezes, there's nothing.

S: And what did they do then?

M: Well, my mother raised us selling bread. Every day she made bread and sent us to sell it. And that was it (María in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, September 13, 2015).

In the construction of María's migration project, we recognize elements that are part of the migration experience of Raúl, her partner, also a native of Iscayachi. Raúl began his migratory trajectory before María, migrating in a circular way to articulate as a worker in different agricultural areas of Argentina. In Iscayachi, the agricultural activity was mainly for self-consumption, and the little surplus was exchanged for other goods for family consumption. For this reason, Raúl's paid work in Argentina meant, as expressed by María, the possibility of accessing certain unthinkable goods from the peasant economy of their place of origin. In this way, we can understand Raúl's migration by his role as the breadwinner of the family that he had with María, leaving to migrate-work.

M: I hooked up young, around 17 years old, yes, over there, his name was Raúl. He already knew how to come here, he worked as a monthly laborer in Corrientes [province of northeastern Argentina] to a place, I don't know the name, but he was alone, he already knew how to go there; [...] He was an expert, so to speak; he went to Corrientes and later to this place. He had already hooked up with me. He came and went every year. Because the youth over there were like that, they came and went. In those years, you knew that the peso had worth, it paid off, and what you earned here, how much did you

earn? One hundred pesos a month! Let's say that at that time, it was like a hundred dollars! [...] What he brought. The things we bought, for someone who doesn't know money, it was money! How would I know! We bought a bed, a good mattress, a small table, [...] Whatever we bought, we treasured it. It was what you had. That had value for me (María in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, September 13, 2015).

However, in a different interview with María, we noted a point of Raúl's migration. The interviewee mentioned that her partner "was a little irresponsible," because "they leave you with the children and go away" (María in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, September 14, 2015). In the fragment cited in this paragraph, María speaks in the plural, generalizing a type of behavior of men who migrate, such as her partner and father of her daughters. It can be inferred that her comment refers to the breach of parental responsibilities, such as taking care of the children's support. It can be concluded that at certain times, Raúl's migration did not respond to the masculine command that assigns men the role of family breadwinners.

María began her migratory trajectory in 2000 when she was 20 years old. She traveled to Apolinario Saravia with her three young daughters, to rejoin Raúl: "I too was kind of forced to come, because what was I going to do with three girls? And there it was ugly, those years were ugly, sometimes we had no food, I suffered a lot from hunger" (María in Apolinario Saravia, personal communication, September 14, 2015). Like Ariza (2007), in this analysis, we recognize that on certain occasions, male migration can mean a greater impoverishment of women, as well as multiplication in workloads.

María felt obliged to migrate due to her financial situation and mainly due to the lack of possibilities to support her three daughters. This argument counteracts the idea of female migration out of love or through marital relationships (Oso & Rivas Mateos, 2012). Before migrating, María was in a dire situation in Bolivia. She saw reunification with her daughters' father in Argentina as a possibility of subsistence for her and the girls.

In short, although the established context in which the migration of the women we interviewed is similar to that of the men, they construct a different migration project. Initially, when they do not have a partner, they require permission, authorization, and collaboration of the male authority in their families (parents or older brothers).

Therefore, it can be inferred that in their paternal/maternal family environments, the legitimate way for women to migrate is together with a man, mainly a spouse (this does not mean that there are no autonomous migrations, as we will see in the next section). For this reason, women tend to migrate later than men. Furthermore, related to the above, it is understood that the migration of women was fundamentally lead by the creation of their domestic units in the places of destination in which they were able to reproduce the female command of motherhood (Ariza, 2007). Likewise, this migration meant working together

with their partners in agriculture in the places of destination. In that sense, it can be considered that migration could also be driven by the possibility of entering a labor market.

### *Autonomous Female Migration Projects*

In this section, the two women's migration projects presented differ from the cases previously analyzed because they began the migration to the NOA autonomously and not as part of a couple project with a man. These are the cases of Juana and Beatriz, who also come from rural areas of the department of Tarija. However, according to what they expressed, their contexts of origin presented conditions of greater vulnerability than the contexts of the previously interviewed women since they did not have family lands.

Moreover, Juana and Beatriz migrated for the first time when they were single and younger than the other women interviewed. Also, there was a first migration experience (before migrating to Argentina) to the city of Tarija, where they were employed in a feminized labor niche: domestic service.

Juana's family was left without land to cultivate when she was little due to the construction of a dam that flooded the land where they lived. So, as a child, she had to be employed outside of her home. As we will see, although Juana's migration is autonomous, she accomplishes it through a male with whom she had a family bond but not as a couple.

J: We all left. The water has been rising, and we have gone up. Building houses on higher ground and our folks were left with little, there wasn't much what was left, almost nothing was left [...]

S: You went first to the city [of Tarija]. How was that?

J: Yes, for a job, I needed clothing, and my parents couldn't give me that. [I was] sixteen years old [...] I got tired of working in the fields and I went to work in the town, in Tarija. I worked there for like three years, I got tired, and I came here [talking about Salta]. My brother came the first time [...] I imagined it was nice. Everyone who came here went there and said "it's nice" [...] My uncle worked in these places. I came for the first time to Pizarro [municipality in the province of Salta] (Juana in Apolinario Saravia, province of Salta, personal communication, September 8, 2015).

For her part, Beatriz, 33, born in San Andrés, began her migratory trajectory autonomously, similar to Juana. Beatriz came from a family without access to land, and she also had a first migration experience to the city of Tarija.

We are six brothers, plus my mother. There are seven of us. My dad passed away when I was about seventeen or so. And then we had no resources, neither my father, nor my mother [...] My grandfather did have land, but since they didn't get along with my mother. Since my father already passed away, they have sort of drifted apart. And my mother was alone, she had to work on a day's wage per day. And that's how she got the six of us out, I



don't know how she did it [...] (Beatriz in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, September 8, 2015).

Like Juana, Beatriz built a new migration project, also autonomous, towards Argentina from this initial migration experience.

People tell you, "over there you make good money, there's work." You have that hope of wanting to improve yourself, [of] having a little more, building the house, having a good living. Us, my mom doesn't have that, she rents there, she doesn't have her own house. And so, I came, I left my job there [...] I made an effort to come here (Beatriz in Apolinario Saravia, Salta province, personal communication, September 8, 2015).

About this project, Beatriz told us how influential those stories about the "benefits" of Argentina were, which described it as a destination in which it was possible to dream of having what was inaccessible in their places of origin.

In both cases, the interviewees built their migration projects autonomously, and in that sense, they broke with the prevailing gender system at the origin because they migrated without a partner. However, when narrating the present difficulties to survive in their place of origin, Juana and Beatriz explained their migration as "forced," thus legitimizing the autonomy of their movement (Mallimaci Barral, 2012). Likewise, the autonomy of this movement can be relativized, since as Rosas (2013) indicates, the migration of these two women was not directly driven by the conditions of greater equality between men and women, but rather was due to the deepening of the social inequality and the deterioration of the labor market in the places of origin. These women even reproduced the hegemonic role of women by articulating themselves as workers in paid domestic service, a labor niche characterized by being precarious, informal, and poorly paid, as well as feminized.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article investigated the contextual factors (at the places of origin and destination) that influenced the migration of the analyzed peasants from Tarija, predominantly bound for the NOA agricultural labor market. Likewise, it was indicated how the gender system operated at the place of origin in the construction of the female and male migration projects, respectively.

Among the main factors that explain this male and female migration, limitations in the social reproduction of domestic units in the places of origin were identified as a consequence of water scarcity, land, and money circulation. It was observed that the limitations in the social reproduction of peasant domestic units in the places of origin due to the scarcity of water, land, and money circulation are among the main factors that explain male and female migration. Thus, the migration of the members of the domestic units appeared as a strategy for their reproduction.



It was also recognized that migration was driven through the attractiveness built on Argentina as a destination. An attractiveness based on the possibility of getting a job and thus being able to access unthinkable goods in the context of origin. According to our interviewees, this information circulates through the stories of their relatives who migrated previously, such as their parents, brothers, cousins, or uncles. Consequently, we also consider that these conditions of attractiveness add to the collective memory of the communities of origin.

In his research on Bolivian migrants to other regions of Argentina, Pizarro (2015b) states that:

[there is a] migratory imaginary that highlights the benefits of living in Argentina, the old custom of relatives and neighbors of ‘going out’ to work to this country, the help received by migratory chains and networks, the growing attraction of urban life and the consumption as well as the utopias of achieving an improvement in their subordinate class and ethnic position (2015b, p. 8).

However, the existence of negative migration experiences was also found, such as the death of Roberto’s father when he was a child. His father migrated temporarily to work in the sugarcane harvest, and while he was in Argentina, he became ill and died. Roberto remembers this situation as traumatic because of what it cost to repatriate his father’s body to Bolivia. Precisely, we believe that this event influenced Roberto’s decision not to migrate and remain in Bolivia.

As for the men interviewed, it was observed that when they reach a certain age, between 14 and 20 years old, there is a change in the life cycle. According to the stories, men “become young” between those ages. This stage appears associated with the command to get out and look, migrate, and self-sustain in economic terms. Then, those men interviewed who are part of peasant families in rural areas of Tarija built their migration projects by joining networks together with other men—generally older—from their nuclear family (brothers and parents) or their extended family (such as uncles, cousins, and brothers-in-law).

In this way, male migratory networks and chains were activated (Pedone, 2008), which guarantees to know “how to circulate” (Tarrius, 2000) due to the previous experiences of the first migrants. In short, the men we interviewed built their migration projects responding to the command anchored in a sexual division of labor that legitimizes that they are the ones who migrate to articulate as paid workers. At the same time, they stayed away from the domestic sphere work and mainly from the caregiving tasks of other household members.

Likewise, two types of migration projects were identified among the men interviewed, which respond to two moments in their life cycle. First, as we mentioned earlier, when they were single, they carried out a migration project when they “became young.” This migration also implied joining other men in their family to work in horticultural production in Salta and Jujuy. This migration had seasonal and cyclical dynamics; that is, they migrated to

different productive areas of the NOA to work, stayed for a few months at the destination, and then returned to Bolivia.

Then, after several years of migrating under the modality mentioned above, these men began the second type of migration project different from the previous one because it was carried out as a couple with native women from their places of origin. The objective of this new migration project consisted in the formation of their domestic unit and the definitive establishment in the destination.

A different modality is recognized in female migration projects. In general terms, the women interviewed do not respond to the qualitative feminization of migration; they are not pioneers of migration. Their mobility “follows in the footsteps” of their partners, as Natalia said. Moreover, the main argument they made was the possibility of reproducing as women, mothers in their own domestic unit.

However, the presence of independent female migration projects was also observed to a lesser extent, such as the migration projects of Juana and Beatriz, which can be seen as part of a breach with specific gender commands. In this case, with the command that—in the framework of the peasant families of Tarija—legitimizes the migration of women only when they accompany the men with whom they have a marital relationship. This rupture and, therefore, the autonomy of migration could be relativized because these women have expressed in their stories a situation of greater vulnerability in their contexts of origin if we compare them with the rest of the cases studied.

Juana and Beatriz justified their migration as “forced” or “obliged,” since their paternal/maternal families did not have what they needed for their subsistence. These women were also articulated as paid domestic service workers, a precarious, informal, and poorly paid job niche, and an occupation frequently assigned to women.

To conclude, it is considered that the pending analysis for future work should be oriented to thinking about how migration and the gender system in the destination affect these people, their migratory trajectories, gender roles, and relationships.

Translation: Bárbara Ramírez De Valdez

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