

**Lived Religion, Migration and Transnationalism. The Case of the Nazarene of Caguach in Punta Arenas, Chile, and Río Gallegos, Argentina**

**Religión vivida, migración y transnacionalismo. El Caso del Nazareno de Caguach en Punta Arenas, Chile, y Río Gallegos, Argentina**

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### ABSTRACT

This article reports ethnographic findings on the religious assemblage of the Nazarene of Caguach in Punta Arenas, Chile, and Río Gallegos, Argentina, describing a popular tradition that took root in the Chiloé archipelago and then spread to new regions through different historical stages of migrant circulation. It shows how the development of this religious phenomenon led to the formation of communities, the creation of ritual families, the expansion of networks, and the circulation of meanings. In this sense, this work explores how these religious practices established community ties by preserving traditions in multi-sited settings.

*Keywords:* 1. religion, 2. migration, 3. transnationalism, 4. Chiloé, 5. Chile-Argentina.

### RESUMEN

Este artículo muestra hallazgos etnográficos sobre el ensamblaje religioso del Nazareno de Caguach en Punta Arenas, Chile, y Río Gallegos, Argentina. Así, refiere a una tradición popular prevalecida en el archipiélago de Chiloé, Chile, y extendida posteriormente a nuevos territorios a través de diferentes etapas históricas de circulación migrante. Se evidencia cómo el desarrollo del fenómeno religioso provocó la formación de comunidades, la generación de familias rituales, la ampliación de redes y la circulación de significados. En este sentido, se explora cómo estas prácticas religiosas crearon vínculos comunitarios a través de la conservación de tradiciones en escenarios multisituados.

*Palabras clave:* 1. religión, 2. migración, 3. transnacionalismo, 4. Chiloé, 5. Chile-Argentina.

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

Jesus of Nazareth / It seems it was yesterday / That you arrived in Gallegos / Giving love and faith. /  
Your people worship you / Like back in Chiloé / Devout men and women / Pray and sing too. /  
Nazarene, Nazarene / I sing unto you, I worship you / And your people greet you / On this foreign  
soil. / A-singing and a-praying / We follow your procession / With guitars and accordions / In song. /  
The day you arrived, / April 22<sup>nd</sup>, / I was overwhelmed by excitement / As we reunited. / Nazarene,  
Nazarene / I sing unto you, I worship you / And your people greet you / On this foreign soil.<sup>3</sup>

This song dedicated to Jesus of Nazareth exhibits certain relevant aspects of the discussion on migration and lived religion, evoking emotions and feelings of nostalgia almost always brought about by the experiences and fervor of religious practices in foreign lands. This paper presents developments from the second stage of ethnographic work in a research project completed in 2018. The objective of this article is to discuss the religious transnationalization of the Nazareth of Caguach on the basis of periods of migration and the settlement of communities of Chiloé islanders in Punta Arenas, Chile, and Río Gallegos, Argentina. To that effect, three stages of transnationalization are considered: the first is the *founding stage* in Caguach, Chiloé, which is associated with the arrival of a group of Franciscans from Peru in 1771, known as the “Colegio de Propaganda Fide de Santa Rosa [that brought] Friar Hilario Martínez, the first to worship Jesus of Nazareth on Caguach island” (Cárdenas & Trujillo, 1986, p. 20).

The second places emphasis on the *historical mobility* of communities migrating to the Punta Arenas, Puerto Natales, and Tierra del Fuego areas in the Magallanes region, which occurred from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the late 1980s. Finally, the third is the *transnational assemblage stage* in Río Gallegos, Argentina, supported by the main believers, migrants from Chiloé and Punta Arenas. This historical mobility allowed local traditions to spread beyond their places of origin, preserving religious practices and expanding cultural imaginaries as Patagonia was rearranged.

This article aims to present ethnographic findings on these movements from a transnational perspective of migration (Basch, Glick-Schiller, & Szanton-Blanc, 1994). This merits a reflection on the relationships between migration and religion from the communities of origin (Chiloé), analyzed complementarily as having a dual impact on the

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<sup>2</sup>This article describes the results of the second stage of research in Fondecyt Project No. 3160798 “*Etnografías en movimiento: imaginarios culturales y trayectorias migratorias de comunidades transnacionales chilotas entre Ushuaia, Argentina, y Punta Arenas, Chile, 1950-2015*” (*Ethnographies on the move: cultural imaginaries and migratory trajectories of transnational communities from Chiloé between Ushuaia [Argentina] and Punta Arenas [Chile] 1950-2015*), in which the author is a lead researcher.

<sup>3</sup>Field notes. Song of the Nazarene of Río Gallegos, entitled *Reencuentro* (“The Reunion”). Original music and lyrics by Sergio Ricardo Hueicha.

destinations (Punta Arenas and Río Gallegos), by identifying the establishment of migration networks (Odgers, Rivera, & Hernández, 2015). Attention is also drawn to the fact that mobility experiences transform religious intensities not just among the closest followers but also more recent members, who appropriate new meanings, reproducing and strengthening traditions within a broader nebula of transnational circulation.

Based on these considerations, it is fitting to situate the Jesus of Nazareth tradition within a context of new territorialities in the region of Patagonia, bearing in mind that these processes are mediated by transnational social fields (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004) of global assemblage (Collier & Ong, 2005) that are associated with various ethnic landscapes (Appadurai, 2001). In this sense, it is worth asking: How are religious traditions reconfigured outside of their places of origin, while simultaneously belonging to different areas?

### BLURRING GEOGRAPHIES, REASSEMBLING TRADITIONS

It is important to beware of the risks of bias from methodological nationalism in references to migration in Chile. Studies have focused on the Norte Grande, a region that borders Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia (Erazo, 2009; González Miranda, 2009; Tapia Ladino & Gavilán Vega, 2006). The Norte Grande area has been considered a *hyperborder* region (Guizardi & Garcés, 2013; Guizardi, Valdebenito, & López, 2017; Valdebenito, 2017) due to the “new migration [from Bolivia and Peru] brought about by the expansion of the mining industry [...] transnational and cross-border migration is a basic social phenomenon yet can have large-scale or long-lasting social impacts” (Guizardi & Garcés, 2013, p. 74-102).

Other studies in the center of the country, in cities like Santiago, have documented foreign assemblages of Peruvian (Garcés, 2015; Guizardi & Garcés, 2013; Stefoni, 2004), Cuban (Saldívar, 2018), Japanese (Ferrando, 2004), and Arab and Jewish (Agar, 2007) communities. It should be noted that no studies exist addressing religious traditions<sup>4</sup> from the transnational perspective of migration in the *southern Patagonian macrozone*.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is historians who have placed particular emphasis on age-old movements from Chiloé to the Chonos Archipelago and the Guaitecas islands (Álvarez, 2002; Hucke-Gaete, Álvarez, Ruiz, & Torres, 2008; Emperaire, 1963). So it is that they recovered, for example, chronicles by missionaries (Müller, 2007; Montiel, 2003), and reconstructed migrations and journeys to the Chilean and Argentinean Patagonia (Cárdenas, 2007;

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<sup>4</sup>Some scholars of religion in Chile have been keen to emphasize cultural traditions of the *southern Patagonian macrozone* using concepts like heteroglossia (Moulian, 2011), in reference to the religious heterogeneity and multivocality among ethnic Mapuche-Huilliche communities.

<sup>5</sup>Understood as an area of study and unit of analysis that situates people, places, and spaces of hypermobility.

Urbina, 2002; Urbina, 2007). The nomadic lifestyle of the communities from Chiloé is associated with establishing populations in places like Magallanes, in Chile, and other parts of Patagonia: the so-called *pueblos de plástico* or “plastic villages” (Vásquez de Acuña, 1993), campsites, and small towns (Silva, 2011).

In recent decades, scientific perspectives have sought to understand assemblages of cultural traditions outside of their places of origin. These proposals take into account the contribution of the transnational approach in putting an end to viewing the local and global dimension as a deceptive binary (Hannerz, 1996; Glick-Schiller, 2008; Kearney, 2003), such that they help to understand the dynamics of these practices articulated to a series of symbolic elements that enable connections and interactions in different contexts of interaction.

Theorists of transnationalism refer to the blurring of the world-system as the symbolic disarticulation of nation states, entailing “a reordering of the binary, cultural, social, and epistemological distinctions of the modern period” (Kearney, 2003). This same author suggests understanding transnationalism through two relevant meanings, “one is the conventional one having to do with forms of organization and identity which are not constrained by national boundaries [and the other] corresponds to the political-economic and sociocultural ordering of late capitalism [...] as [the] ‘End of Empire’” (2003, p. 51). This is visible in mobility dynamics such as the establishment of communities, sending remittances, the expansion of new markets, and the circulation of translocal identities, meanings, and goods. Migrants’ place of origin takes on relevance, particularly bearing in mind the links forged with places of residence.

Nina Glick-Schiller points to the need to “turn to a reflective approach that situates the paradigm of transnational migration historically and geographically” (2008, p. 29). The second suggestion made by the author is to stop viewing “the emergence of transnational migration [as attributable solely] to the development of new technologies [as] there is no historical basis for this interpretation” (2008, p. 30). In this sense, transnationalism manifests itself as a series of related networks that are generated between the places of origin and places of residence of migrants, thus maintaining a regular and simultaneous economic, political, and cultural flow (Guarnizo, 2006). On this basis, two concepts are of relevance for this article. The first of these is the *transnational social field*, understood as “a set of multiple networks intertwined with social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are exchanged unequally, organized, and transformed” (Levitt & Glick-Schiller, 2004, p. 66).

The second is Robert Orsi’s notion of *lived religion*, “conceived as a means to explain, understand, and shape reality [... it is] a network of relationships between heaven and earth, engaging non-humans with a series of different sacred figures” (2006, p. 2). He maintains that religion is not strictly speaking a network of meanings, but rather of relationships that evoke experiences that are the result of “practices, objects, presences [...] The gods, saints, demons, ancestors [...] are real in experience and in practice [...] in life

circumstances and personal trajectories, in the stories people tell about them” (2006, p. 18). This same author proposes understanding lived religion “as a form of cultural work [that] directs attention to institutions and persons, texts and rituals, practice and theology, things and ideas [...] family and social world” (2003, p. 172). Both concepts are helpful in understanding how religious traditions are assembled based on the fact they “interact with other elements, occupying a common field in contingent, [uneasy, unstable interrelationships]<sup>6</sup>” (Collier & Ong, 2005, p. 12). Thus, “religion, like capitalism, is no longer situated within a legal regime or territory” (Levitt, 2007, p. 69), but rather, religious traditions occupy ever more diverse collective integration spaces.

### METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY

The methodological proposal is qualitative and comprises two stages of ethnographic intervention employed as part of Fondecyt research Project No. 3160798. The first takes into account the location of unilocal religious traditions (historical scenarios of meaning), which means imagining the past in the present using historical ethnography, thus also enabling an encounter with the past in different circumstances. In this sense, attention is drawn to the fact that ethnography was used as “a narrative [analytical and descriptive] discipline [that makes use of] historical ethnography” (Lennartsson, 2012, p. 90). Viewed from a historical perspective (Wietschorke, 2010), ethnography thus becomes a *flux capacitor* and *spyglass* that calls for an understanding of social aspects as an ambivalence – that is to say, as a substratum of a twofold purpose, making it possible to locate cultural findings from cross-cutting narrative scenarios. The second stage concerns the location of religious scenarios and actors in multilocal geographical contexts. This approach takes multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 2001; Falzon, 2009) as a reference point to understand connections through a circumstantial monitoring of persons, objects, metaphors, fabrics, lives, and conflicts in constant movement.

In this sense, we zoomed out on the map and selected the *southern Patagonian macrozone* to study the mobility and connections of migrants from Chiloé. We focused on two settlements: Punta Arenas in the Magallanes Region, in Chile; and Río Gallegos in the Santa Cruz Province, in Argentina. There were two main reasons for choosing these towns. The first is the migratory dimension of the region as a connecting point; historically, migrants from Chiloé traveled to Punta Arenas both by land and on ships via different routes (see Figure 1). Furthermore, it is considered the first place of religious assemblage for the Nazarene tradition outside the archipelago. The second is linked to labor-related hypermigration in economic sectors resulting from wool (ovine) industries known as *estancias* or *frigoríficos* (meat packing plants), leading to permanent settlements of Chiloé migrants and the religious tradition of Jesus of Nazareth of Caguach.

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<sup>6</sup>TN: Quote completed by the translator.

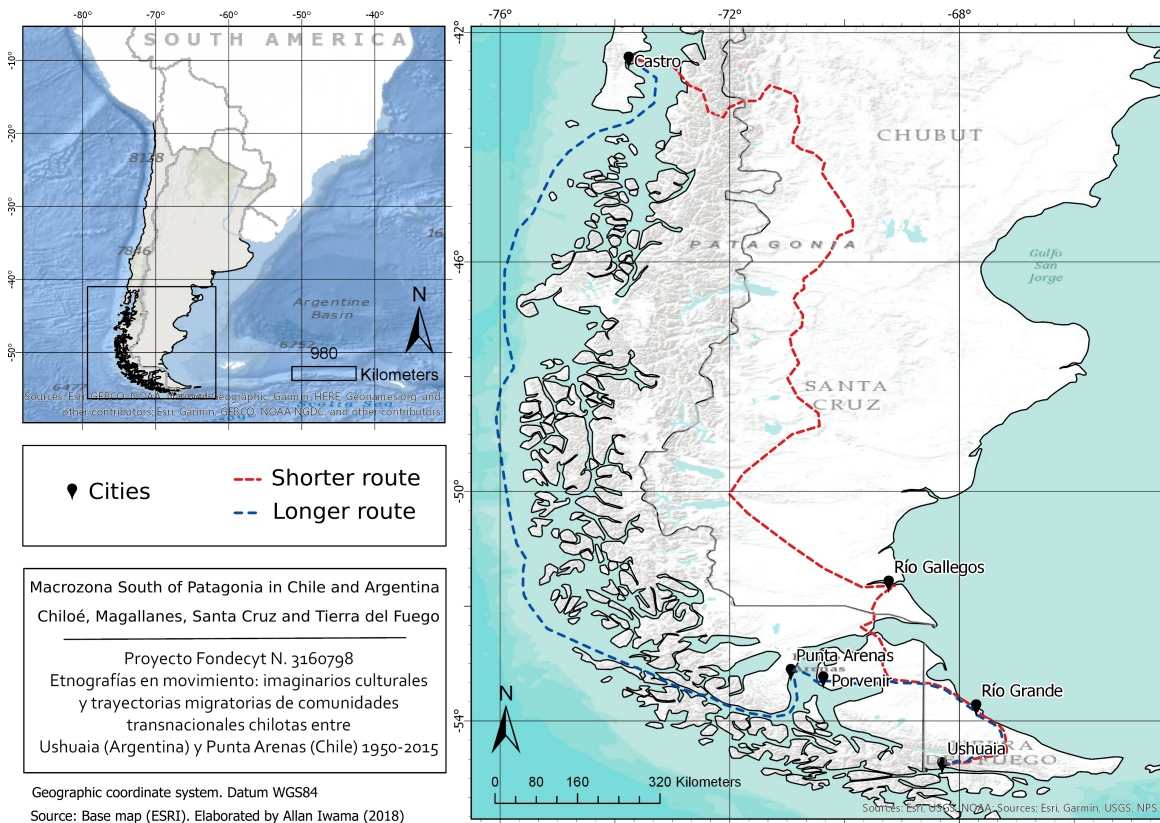
The ethnographic intervention employed information collection strategies through the circumstantial *monitoring* of people in different locations. We selected three types of migrants: a) returnee migrants, b) stationary migrants, and c) religious followers. Some were contacted in private homes, workplaces, recreational spaces, and religious centers. The fieldwork employed virtual ethnography (Boellstorff, 2012) as a targeting strategy through chat pages, discussion forums, and virtual communities on Facebook, analyzing religious environments through a computer screen. The informants contacted shared their devotional experiences based on photographs, which was important to establish a visual analysis (Ardévol & Vayreda, 2002). This inspired cartographic work (Rivadeneira Velásquez, 2010) on places of worship. We conducted 70 in-depth interviews (Guber, 2001) and collected 10 life stories from key informants (Bertaux, 2005) in Chiloé, Punta Arenas, and Río Gallegos, in addition to reviewing historical documents (Bolufer, 2002; Lennartsson, 2012) in the General Archive of the Nation (Buenos Aires), National Archive (Santiago) and Municipal Library of Castro (Chiloé).

### *Study Area*

The archipelago of Chiloé is located in southern Chile, between the 41<sup>st</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> parallels south, and has an area of 9,181 km<sup>2</sup>. It is part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Region, Los Lagos. As of the last published census, the total population of the region was 167,659 (National Statistics Institute of Chile, 2012). This archipelago is divided into ten administrative communes: Ancud, Quemchi, Dalcahue, Curaco de Vélez, Castro, Chonchi, Queilen, Puqueldón, Quinchao, and Quellón. The inhabitants' main occupations include farming (especially potatoes) and fishing; artisanal demersal fishing has been a local means of subsistence since the 1960s (Gajardo Cortés & Ther Ríos, 2011).

After the 1980s, companies were established that brought salmon farming to Chiloé's inner coast. This is of no small importance as historically the relationships between artisanal fishing and migration explain the mobility of Chiloé islanders towards various parts of the far south. Above all, this was the case for some inhabitants of the so-called "plastic villages" in areas of Aysén and Magallanes (Chile), which were established by settling artisanal fishermen looking for shoals of fish. The end of migration from Chiloé to the Argentinean Patagonia was closely linked to the arrival of salmon companies in the archipelago in the early 1980s. Cultural traditions are associated with Mapuche-Huilliche mythology (Pandolfi, 2016). To this day, these religious traditions remain important channels for socialization between the islanders and mainlanders, and are essentially Judeo-Christian in nature (and include the Nazarene of Caguach as a symbolic reference).

Figure 1. *Route Map and Chiloé Migratory Trajectories*



Source: Allan Iwama, 2018.

### RELIGIOUS TRADITION OF JESUS OF NAZARETH IN CAGUACH, CHILOÉ, CHILE

Following the expulsion of the Jesuits (Society of Jesus) in Chiloé in 1767, the arrival of Franciscans from the Colegio de Propaganda Fide in Santa Rosa de Ocopa, Peru, was an important channel that enabled religious activities in the archipelago to continue. It was “Pedro Ángel Espiñeira [who] requested that the Colegio de Propaganda Fide of Chillán send ministers to cover the vacancies resulting from the expulsion of Jesuits [and so] in 1769 the eight missionaries arrived” (Cárdenas & Trujillo, 1986, p. 19-20). However, they would return to Colegio San Idelfonso in Chillán, while a group of “fifteen Franciscans [left] Callao bound for Chiloé [... including Friar Hilario Martínez who] replaced Friar Norberto Fernández, the first missionary to move to the town in 1771” (Cárdenas & Trujillo, 1986, p. 20-21). As told by Víctor Téllez, dean (*fiscal*) of the chapel of San José, Friar Hilario was “a Franciscan priest who left the Mission of Santa Rosa de Ocopa in Peru and arrived in southern Chile, and preached the Gospel through images and painting” (Téllez, personal communication). The Franciscan evangelization strategy, says Renato

Cárdenas, was based on Fide propaganda: “It was a program, it had to be done through music, theater, singing, and image representation” (Cárdenas, personal communication).

According to Alberto Trivero, before arriving in Chiloé, Friar Hilario “had been a missionary in Tahiti [and brought] with him a collection of sacred images” (2011, p. 6). Upon his arrival in Tenaún, where he had settled, “a tragic event occurred that [led] him to Caguach in May 1778, taking his images with him, after the race between the five islands” (Cárdenas, personal communication). This race was contested in rowing canoes by inhabitants of the five towns (Apiao, Alao, Caguach, Chaulinec, and Tac), and afterwards the images were divided between the communities, with the image of the Nazarene to remain on Caguach. According to Alberto Trivero, “Friar Hilario’s collection, which was made up of eight images, was not donated to the five communities: they bought it for a very high price, which they paid in annual installments from 1778 to 1782” (1986, p. 8).

However, accounts by Cárdenas and Trujillo contradict Trivero, acknowledging that “moving the images from Tenaún to Caguach was not easy, and they practically had to steal them” (1986, p. 22). The dean Víctor Téllez offers a more peaceful version of the relocation of the images, stating that Friar Hilario “arrived in Tenaún with his saint and spoke to the people of Caguach, with the native chief Paulino Guachin in 1778, and so the image was sent” (Téllez, personal communication). Chronicles offer different versions of the way imagery was transported between islands, but do agree, above all, on the origin of Friar Hilario and his intentions in the archipelago, and in particular that he intended to build “a shrine dedicated to the Nazarene and the passion and death of the crucified Jesus” (Trivero, 2011, p. 15).

The later periods of evangelization in Chiloé are associated with the Society of Jesus and the Propaganda Fide of Santa Rosa de Ocopa, both of which belonged to the Spanish Crown established in Peru. In this sense, the strategies deployed by the clergy are not insignificant; these were based on experiences between 1581 and 1670, therefore having originated during the *founding stage* characterized by the removal of idols and the acceptance of religious elements. Considering the above, Manuel Marzal notes that one strategy was to establish a calendar of patronal feasts throughout the year, which was the way in which “God used trickery to acquaint the Indians with Catholicism and facilitate their conversion” (2002, p. 69).

From that point on, the *consolidation stage* refers to hierarchical evangelization through syncretic meanings of *indigenous Christianity*. This model of evangelization was first reproduced in Chiloé by Jesuit intervention, and later by the Franciscans, who formed hierarchical figures like the “dean” (*fiscal*) or “*amaricaman*.” In this vein, Renato Cárdenas acknowledges that this is an indigenous name: “*Amari* is a pastor and *amarintun* is what a healer does to drive sickness out of the body” (Cárdenas, personal communication). In this sense, the creation of this figure represented a degree of flexibility in religious integration, providing stability and promoting leadership among communities given that “they chose the sons of caciques, from the same bloodline; not the elders but



young men, for them to learn and increase their presence within the community” (Cárdenas, personal communication).

Since it was the deans (*fiscales*) who acted as guides, made decisions, and attended activities such as festivities, ceremonies, and meetings, the figure of the dean played a key role in the communities, and even more so in the absence of priests. Other important figures were those in the chapter, who were responsible for organizing religious celebrations. So it was that the Nazarene emerged as the most deeply rooted celebration in the archipelago, safeguarded by communities that came together to share out the activities. Marilyn Ulloa confirmed that “the Nazarene is present in every chapel, but it started first in Caguach, where it was most popular and the priests and people themselves attached greater importance to it” (Ulloa, personal communication). Today, the Feast of the Nazarene has preserved aspects from the colony, such as the way it is organized, the integration of Catholic and indigenous Huilliche traditions, and ceremonial and hierarchical structures.

The Nazarene is celebrated each year between August 21<sup>st</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, and organized by “seven offices in the chapter, plus the band, devotees who would pray, musicians, church adorners, image dressers, altars, arches, garlands” (Téllez, personal communication). It involves a complex system of symbols translated into syncretic elements; as Téllez (personal communication) affirms, “it’s not just a case of turning up and putting things up; each arch signifies the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the garlands go together in a chain, which is the unity of the community; you dance round counter-clockwise; the *Nguillatunes* do the same thing.” The musical groups that play at religious events are fundamental as a temporal aspect of ceremonies and are made up of “the accordion, flute, guitar, violin, bass drum, snare drum, and a bird whistle” (Téllez, personal communication).

The ceremonies are prepared through structures with clearly defined and established limits: “The Nazarene novena explains the Passion of Christ, an Act of Contrition, the offering of a novena, five acts of atonement, the example, the day’s prayer, a prayer of supplication, and rejoicing” (Téllez, personal communication). They also “sing good night, the Mysteries, the Three Crowns, and to finish, a song called ‘Échanos tu bendición’ (Give Us Your Blessing), all played by the band” (Téllez, personal communication). The celebration is staged as a recreation of a mythical past, incorporated by spreading ceremonial passages that preserve the tradition.

### *Migration from Chiloé to Patagonia*

Migratory trajectories in Patagonia respond to different stages in history. In the 1920s, in the Strike of 1921, seen as one of the most significant conflicts in the history of Patagonia, about five hundred rural workers were massacred as they sought to prevent the exploitation of Chilean labor by their Argentinean employers (Bayer, 1993). However, the vicissitudes brought about by the strike did not curb mass migration to Patagonia; indeed, Felipe Montiel, a historian from Chiloé, claims that “moving around was a constant from 1930 to

the 60s or 70s; for almost fifty years, a great many migrants would come to work in many of the estancias and meat packing plants during the shearing season” (Montiel, personal communication).

Some of the major settlement areas were associated with a boom in work. This was the case, for example, for farms during the shearing season in Río Gallegos, in the meat packing plants of Río Grande, in the mines of Río Turbio, on the oil rigs of Comodoro Rivadavia, and on construction sites in parts of Tierra del Fuego, both in Porvenir and Ushuaia. However, it was in the shearing industry that most migrants from Chiloé found work. In this regard, Felipe Montiel notes that the migrants “traveled in caravans; people from different places got together and agreed to form a shearing caravan, they traveled in groups to Patagonia” (Montiel, personal communication). These groups or caravans were made up of “fleecers, people who would fleece the sheep; shearers, who would shear the sheep; the press operator (*presero*), those who would gather up the wool, cooks; [some] were relatives, friends, or immediate family” (Montiel, personal communication).

The boom in mass migration continued from the 1930s to the 1970s and played a key role in the explosion in migration due to a series of events in the Chiloé archipelago. This mobility was brought about by low agricultural production: “Late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) in the 1950s spoiled the whole potato crop, people left the fields, left their homes, [until eventually] they all went to Patagonia” (Mancilla, personal communication). Similarly, an earthquake in the 1960s led to the “families –poor peasants– emigrating from Chiloé to Patagonia. [...] There were whole families in Castro boarding boats bound for Argentina or Magallanes to seek better living conditions” (Mancilla & Mardones, 2010, p. 177).

Likewise, the coup d’état in the early 1970s also drove communities from Chiloé into Argentina. In this regard, María Sepúlveda acknowledges that “it was a difficult period for everyone; many families left Chiloé seeking better living conditions, we didn’t want to live under [the] dictatorship and Patagonia protected us” (Sepúlveda, personal communication). The assemblage of salmon industries in the early 1980s “reduced migration due to the jobs they created throughout the island, there was also a drop in the number of estancias, the rules changed to protect workers, and it wasn’t in the interest of the estancia owners to pay more” (Pérez, personal communication). Based on these migratory ties, cultural and religious traditions assembled in southern areas as different generations of migrants from Chiloé took up residence across Patagonia.

### *Collective Action and the Nazarene Tradition in Punta Arenas, Chile*

As we examine the first indications of the mysticism of the Nazarene of Caguach in Punta Arenas, it is worth noting that it originated in the late 1970s as one of the cultural traditions followed by the communities of migrants from Chiloé in Magallanes. In the beginning, this mysticism developed essentially on the outskirts of the city, such as the 18 de Septiembre,

Prat, and Pingüino settlements to the south and west. Indeed, these settlements were made up of migrants from Chiloé who had managed to distribute among themselves plots of land “12 ½ meters wide by 25 meters long [...] This was all completed with proper planning for the streets and housing delivered under the supervision of the Office of Municipal Works and the Land Office of Magallanes” (Moreno, 2011, p. 133).

Certain cultural and identity quirks from Chiloé stand out in the construction of these settlements, such as religious practices that highlight distinctive aspects of inhabitants’ places of origin. In this sense, the neighborhood becomes “common ground in the ideology of the city’s inhabitants, as it is somewhat effective in recounting, while synthesizing, various aspects of reality” (Gravano, 2016, p. 140).

However, the history of this religious assemblage reveals a series of intertwined networks that triggered broader collective acts of appropriation, legitimation, and institutionalization. Arturo Hueicha, a Chilote<sup>7</sup> based in Punta Arenas, explains how the Nazarene tradition began in private homes with a practice by “Doña Pancha and her brother Francisco [who suggested] to neighbors they come to say a prayer in a home; that was in August 1979” (Hueicha, personal communication), and who continued this form of worship: “then in 1980, they moved the prayer somewhere else, to another home” (Hueicha, personal communication). This spread from person to person until “Bishop Tomás González, [when he found out that] this act of worship had begun in homes, had them attend the Church of Fátima in District 18” (Hueicha, personal communication). This turned out to be an important discovery for the migrant communities, as it enabled them to establish identity references that distinguished them from other communities, making it possible for them to engage in a range of aspects of Chiloé culture.

The community’s integration led to the mass extension of meanings associated with the Nazarene, which included, for example, sacred music. Arturo Hueicha recalls Doña Pancha: “She said to me, ‘You can play the guitar, help me’; with a song book we started to play melodies like [those] we heard in Chiloé” (Hueicha, personal communication). Thus, this collective engagement did not just help community members to integrate, but was also the trigger for the creation of a conceivable, and perhaps immense, religious community. Doubtless they were not aiming for “a territorialization of beliefs [but rather to have their members belong to] a robust community that could move forward, sustainably, from one side of history to another” (Anderson, 1993, pp. 36-48).

This fervor for the Nazarene continued in the years that followed, as noted by Hueicha: “First there were fifteen of us, then more joined, then there were 200 and the following year, 800. The first time it was just a prayer and on the Sunday, a rosary; by the third year we had a novena and went out in procession with instruments” (Hueicha, personal communication). The tradition was legitimized not just by the religious movement, but also the expansion of places of worship and religious reference, such as the Fátima chapel,

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<sup>7</sup>TN: *Chilote*. A native of Chiloé.

which began worshipping the Nazarene. This institutionalization process was consolidated in 1987 with the arrival of an image from Chiloé, courtesy of Bishop Tomás, who “commissioned a Nazarene from a sculptor in Castro [the capital of Chiloé]” (Hueicha, personal communication), and it was Hueicha himself who presented it to the community. It can therefore be said that religious figures almost always provide continuity to reterritorialized practices, above all those that take on excessive symbolic significance, implicit in the historical and collective memory of believers.

As part of the tradition’s legitimization and institutionalization process, various religious groups were formed with the aim of managing, organizing, and structuring the active Nazarene practice. So it was that “a group was formed, the Knights of the Nazarene (*Caballeros del Nazareno*), [who] were like guards who protected the image during times of celebration, [and who were also responsible for] the congregation of the chapter, the folkloric ensemble, and the set of banners; everything was done like in Caguach” (Hernández, personal communication). The celebration is currently held “the last week of August [... when we perform the] novena and mass is held on Sunday at midnight, with the *patadanza* sword dance, banners, just like in Chiloé” (López, personal communication).

This integration process organized the community with the construction of the Jesus of Nazareth shrine, currently located in the high sector of the city (Avenida Circunvalación on the corner of Salvador Allende). Some worshippers of the shrine –almost all from the 18 de Septiembre settlement– recall taking part in various activities, in different groups, to help to build it. Flórez states that “a plot of land was purchased and we intended to build the chapel; we worked for many years to build the shrine, the whole community took part. This church is 20 years old, the Knights of the Nazarene built it” (Flórez, personal communication). Such community engagement, clearly visible among the communities from Chiloé, bear the hallmark of displaced communities endeavoring to rebuild their homeland outside of their places of origin. The ethnographic findings show how the reconstruction of the homeland occurred under the banner of “lived religion,” both in terms of the construction of the temple, the organization of feasts and the formation of communities, and in the retraditionalization of local cultural elements.

These processes do not always last, due to competition between community members. In this sense, Dante Montiel maintains that “for decades, the Chiloé community in Magallanes was not organized as a group, instead finding this community life like in Chiloé, in a territorial grouping, a homogeneous neighborhood enabling the community to identify itself collectively” (2007, p.1). This same author notes that in the case of Punta Arenas, “they display their culture and origins [...] in the Chilote Centers (*Centros Chilotes*); the folkloric ensembles, [...] among which] the well-known 18 de Septiembre settlement [has established itself] as the typical Chiloé neighborhood [...] with its parish of the Nazarene of Caguach” (2007, p. 1). This has manifested itself in the ruptures within the community, as described by Armando Ojeda, sacristan of the Jesus of Nazareth Sanctuary:

“We all divided here; Chiloé natives are very proud” (Ojeda, personal communication). This attitude is no doubt reflected in the tradition, as although “things used to be done properly, recently this has petered out, the tradition has not been respected, it is no longer followed like in its place of origin” (Hueicha, personal communication).

Nonetheless, there remain elements such as “the rosary, but they made it longer; Moncho Yáñez’s song ‘Mi Niñito’ was lost, it’s a hymn and the priest doesn’t like it and won’t allow it to be played, he’s not from Chiloé; this act of worship has been built up and the tradition has to be kept up” (Hueicha, personal communication). The rivalry between community members is complex –even incessant– and often brought about by the connections made between the church, as an institution that regulates religious traditions, and the Chiloé community as continuers of cultural traditions. On both sides, the narratives reveal not just an attempt to remain faithful to tradition, but also the need to recreate the homeland within a complex environment in which senses of belonging are articulated.

It should be noted that the Nazarene religious observance is not only assembled in parts of Magallanes, but also other areas of Patagonia, with the southern regions of Argentina being flexible habitats of meaning that have accommodated the tradition. In this sense, José Paredes acknowledges that “first it was in Punta Arenas, then in Puerto Natales, and after that in Río Turbio and Río Gallegos, but the largest celebration is in Punta Arenas and Río Gallegos, as these [towns] have the highest population of Chiloé natives” (Paredes, personal communication). It is clear that the traces left by migrants from Chiloé are part of new cultural geographies that include the spread of the Nazarene tradition to different parts of Argentina.

The town of Río Gallegos has been considered a point of reference for the mass extension of religious practices, above all because it is home to communities of settled migrants from different generations. In this sense, María Hernández, a Chilean resident in Río Gallegos, acknowledges that “worshipping the Nazarene came from Chiloé, but also Punta Arenas, because most of us have family members on the other side, and we’re in touch on a near-constant basis and it transcended the border” (Hernández, personal communication). Transnational connections in lived religion are seen not just as intertwined networks that go beyond territorial borders, but identity networks that serve both to adopt cultural codes from the places of residence and preserve those of the places of origin.

#### TRANSNATIONALIZATION OF THE NAZARENE OF CAGUACH IN RÍO GALLEGOS, ARGENTINA

Religious traditions rooted in identities beyond national borders are almost always driven by followers with a history of migration over generations. This discussion does not refer simply to mobility in terms of “displacement” but an “accumulation of experiences,” which in this particular case are religious in nature and have been preserved by ancestors and among both new and old migrants in foreign lands.

On this basis, transnational migration presupposes a series of “hallmarks” to understand how religious communities experience transnationalism in different places, considering that this is a far-reaching process that “relates to activities, organizations, ideas, identities, and economic and social relationships that often cross and transcend national borders” (Steigenga, Palma, & Girón, 2008, p. 41). Often this includes the extension of markets and goods, along with the circulation of objects and remittances as part of the connections between the places of origin and residence, and the full scope of traditions retraditionalized in many places at the same time, particularly when aspects of religious devotion are lost by crossing territorial borders.

These religious assemblage processes respond, on the one hand, to the historical mobility of Chiloé natives who migrated to Río Gallegos and were responsible for carrying over traditions relating to the Nazarene of Caguach. But they are also the result of collective action by new migrants (newcomers) who do not only transfer a homeland, but also religious emotions, ensuring new cultural codes are incorporated and enabling them to reach others who are unfamiliar with them.<sup>8</sup>

In this sense, Levitt & Glick-Schiller (2004) claim that communities of “transnational migrants use religion to create alternative geographies that can be placed within national borders, [shaping] new spaces that, for some, have a greater meaning and inspire stronger loyalty than politically defined environments” (2004, p. 83). As a result, different communities attempt to legitimize others’ traditions, while encouraging others to appropriate them to continue “safeguarding the tradition” (de la Torre & Gutiérrez, 2005).

Such religious practices are almost always transnationalized based on an extension of networks (ritual families) that show solidarity toward the traditions and beliefs of the places of destination, as a way to become part of the contexts they settle in. In this vein, scholars like James Ferguson refer to these phenomena as “transnational traffic in meaning” (2006, p. 30), occurring in ever more loosely defined areas of creolization (Hannerz, 1987).

So it is that, as Óscar Flórez remarks, “Nazarene worship began with Chiloé migrants who stayed [...] in Río Gallegos” (Flórez, personal communication). It was “Celina and her sister Barbarita Caicheo; one day around September 1997, a group of women were together and started talking about worshipping the image of Jesus of Nazareth of Caguach” (Río Gallegos Christian Community [*Comunidad Cristiana Río Gallegos*], n.d., p. 35), and so the following year, on “August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1998, the first novena began, in memory of the venerated image and with the consent and support of the parish priest Juan Barrios. [A novena that] was prayed even more fervently the following year” (n.d., p. 35). The links between the Catholic Church and the community appeared to grow stronger, until “on

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<sup>8</sup>It is worth stressing that most Chilean migrants settled first in the Chilean District (*Barrio Chileno*), known as Barrio Belgrano, and later around Barrio Evita where the Mary of Nazareth Chapel is found, between Padro Neruda and Lola Mora streets.

December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1999, Celinda [introduced] Monsignor Tomás González, the bishop of Punta Arenas, and worship was increasing in Río Gallegos, because the town [had] a lot of Chiloé residents” (n. d., p. 35).

The close relationship between the two sides of the border enabled “Bishop Tomás González to contact the bishop of Ancud [Chiloé], Juan Luis Iser de Arce, in September 2000, who as a result immediately commissioned the Chiloé sculptor Milton Muñoz to create a replica of the Nazarene of Caguach” (n.d., p. 35). In this sense, the transcendence of the tradition was legitimized by the arrival of the image on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2001, when “a delegation of Chiloé natives resident in Punta Arenas, led by Omar Nahuel, the coordinator of the Order of Knights of Jesus of Nazareth, completed the task entrusted to them by the bishop Tomás González: to donate the image” (n.d., p. 35).

These ties are directly consolidated when power relations are top-down, and driven from the bottom up by a community that establishes agreements and fulfills roles. So it was that the image was handed “to the titular bishop of the Diocese of Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego [Argentina], Monsignor Alejandro Buccolini. Once it had been blessed at the chapel of the bishopric, it was handed to the Christian community of Jesus of Nazareth in Río Gallegos” (n.d., p. 35). Hand in hand with the leader of the religious community, Father Juan Barrios headed down one of the main streets of the city, making a stop opposite the Chilote Center, where the president José Díaz welcomed him, and then the procession ended at the Mary of Nazareth Chapel” (n.d., p. 35).

Thus, transnationalization does not only represent whatever “comes from outside” and settles inside, or crosses borders, but also considers assemblage processes – processes that make it possible to continue “negotiating meanings, values, and symbolic forms, including in this process [both] the cultures from the previous place and those from the new one”<sup>9</sup> (Hannerz, 1996, p. 27). In this regard, it is worth examining the song “Tu llegada” (Your Arrival) dedicated to the Nazarene of Caguach in Río Gallegos, sung by Eva Flórez, a Chilean and Sister or Daughter of Charity of Saint Vincent De Paul:

Dear Nazarene, / We bless you, we adore you. / You arrived in Río Gallegos /  
To bring together your brethren. / Jesus of Nazareth, here you are / In the  
Province of Santa Cruz. / The church that welcomes you / Is that of Mary of  
Nazareth. / That’s why we’re jubilant / That you came from Chiloé. / Jesus of  
Nazareth, here you are / In the Province of Santa Cruz. / The people that  
welcome you / Worship you today from the heart / And here in Río Gallegos /  
We all follow your tradition. / Jesus of Nazareth, here you are / In the Province  
of Santa Cruz (Christian Community of Río Gallegos, n.d., p. 20).

These community efforts to relocate the image represent networks of power that do not just go beyond borders but also strengthen places that welcome migrants, turning the

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<sup>9</sup>TN: Back-translated from the translation used in the Spanish version of this article.

community into a model of the homeland, such that “the relationship between identity and collective action is more complex and ambiguous than it seems at first glance. In many cases, reconstructions of the ‘homeland’ [are] more imagined than real” (Steigenga, Palma, & Girón, 2008: 40), especially when “nostalgia, family difficulties, and changing transnational identities interrupt and may transform one’s idea of the reconstructed homeland” (2008:40). However, over and above the collective effort to *reconstruct the homeland*, other factors served to institutionalize the tradition – for example, the construction of churches and the consolidation of religious leaders.

In this sense, the Spanish priest Juan Barrios emerged as a leader and spiritual guide. As recalled by Mario Cárcamo and José Paredes, “he helped many migrants from Chiloé” (Cárcamo, personal communication) and he “said he was ‘forever a Chilote’; he loved the Chiloé people dearly and arranged the arrival of the Nazarene” (Paredes, personal communication). The community’s job was to help him in work involving “carpentry, masonry; all the labor was provided by Chilotes, free of charge – they were motivated by faith. Chilotes are very religious” (Caipillán, personal communication). It may therefore be concluded that transnational communities in “lived religion take on practices while they travel between different places and establish new relationships that make up their daily lives” (Steigenga, Palma, & Girón, 2008, p. 42).

Currently, the Nazarene tradition takes place as part of the annual feast, an emblematic celebration beginning on August 21<sup>st</sup> and ending on the last Sunday of the month. Eva Flórez explained that the feast is organized by commissions, “some make the costumes or find sponsors, others [take care of] dissemination, promotion, posters or the liturgy, or establish the schedules for the novena, prayers, songs, choirs, [so] they break into the collection box for the Nazarene and use that money to organize the feast” (Flórez, personal communication). Also present are “the Argentinean and Chilean flags, folklore music from Argentina and Chile is played, the cueca and chacarera” (Flórez, personal communication).

Bands play music to liven up the celebration: “six or seven accordions, the bass drum, the guitar all show up... Chilotes are very zealous like that” (Gómez, personal communication). The tradition exhibits credible, representative aspects, even in the religious celebration; “the novena is first, the structure is the same as on Caguach, the rosary, all the mysteries of the rosary, there are opening prayers and traditional songs that are sung back there but are also sung here” (Enríquez, personal communication). Don Hilario, a Chilote and member of the religious community, notes how “all the characteristics of worship were kept, and the other [supporting] parishes are like the other islands that arrive on Caguach; these islands or parishes come with signs or placards that identify them” (Don Hilario, personal communication). Worshipping Jesus of Nazareth, Flórez claims, “is very important here [given that] these migrants were in an unfamiliar place and so they came together, united by tradition, and wanted to experience a little Chiloé in Río Gallegos” (Flórez, personal communication).



It is worth noting that these community spokespeople continually establish ties that go beyond borders, not just to carry out religious duties, but also to establish connections between their places of origin and destination. The Feast of the Nazarene is, therefore, also a community celebration that exhibits icons representative of *Chileanness*, or even more strongly, *Chiloteness*. This distinguishes this patron saint's feast from others also organized by foreign communities, while highlighting aspects of migrant life, such that religiosity enables, generates, and evokes identity reactions that are not understood simply as acts of collective fervor but rather manifest themselves as signs of nostalgia and ways of experiencing transnationalism.

In this sense, the *homeland* becomes the places where those who are "away from home" are settled, whether they are temporarily or permanently resident – in other words, those who are far from the cultural contexts they grew up in and who as a result (whether through their grandparents or parents, or directly) transported the tradition. Thus, Steigenga, Palma, and Girón (2008) maintain that "images from home encompass physical, cultural, ideological, family-related, religious, national, and local elements that combine to create a sense of belonging and identity in a confusing and sometimes hostile environment" (2008: 48). These imagined places are the new habitats of meaning that are preserved as part of everyday life for the transnational Chilote communities in the Argentine Patagonia.

## CONCLUSION

The religious assemblage of the Nazarene of Caguach in Punta Arenas, Chile, and Río Gallegos, Argentina, is a transnational religious process brought about by the historical mobility of men and women traveling from Chiloé to parts of Patagonia. This discussion is focused on understanding the celebration of the Nazarene through three stages of transnationalization. The first is the historical relocation of the tradition from Peru to Chiloé, in the far south of Chile. In the second stage, the tradition traveled from Chiloé to Magallanes, in the Chilean Patagonia – an imagined homeland that became, henceforth, a *home away from home*.

This process is a channel for the dissemination and legitimization of the tradition through community efforts undertaken, individually or collectively, by members of relocated groups. Additionally, these groups generate related and unrelated networks that mobilize organizations and engage in word-of-mouth and media promotion, making more flexible symbolic assemblages in their new places of residence. Lastly, the third stage reveals a transnational assemblage of the tradition in Argentina (from Punta Arenas, Chile, to Río Gallegos, Argentina). Adaptation is flexible with respect to recognition of the tradition, which is legitimized and institutionalized through the construction of monuments (churches), the hierarchization of structures (committees, centers), and the emergence of

leaders (groups, commissions) and multidirectional networks that involve contiguous perimeters and places of production (points of reference and transit).

It should be stressed that this two-site case study reflects new religious territorialities, particularly with respect to the ties established between communities of migrants and local believers in preserving the Jesus of Nazareth tradition outside of Caguach. Finally, these religious expressions reveal a series of findings that open the door to a broader reflection on experiencing one's homeland in transnationalism. Based on the ethnographic findings shown, such a reflection calls for an understanding of narratives on Patagonia not as a geographically defined region but as an area of historical experiences and emotions (nostalgia) that straddle political borders and establish their own boundaries. Furthermore, foreign lands should be viewed as environments that possess cultural capital: an accumulation of knowledge passed down over generations, the socialization of know-how, and a reconfiguration of symbolic meaning: aspects that provide an insight into cultural practices through interactions and dislocations between people, places, and countries.

Translator: Joshua Parker

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