

Attraversando lo stagno: Storie della migrazione ecuadoriana in Europa tra continuità e cambiamento (1997-2007)

Chiara Pagnotta, 2010, Rome, Centro d'Informazione e Stampa Universitaria (CISU).

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As historical scholarship demonstrates, over the *longue durée* of civilizations, migration has been the rule, rather than the exception in global human history. In South America, while Ecuadorian men and women have been no strangers to internal migration, they have only actively participated in international migration since the 1970s. Much like other Latin American countries—El Salvador, the Dominican Republic and Mexico—Ecuador is now a major exporter of labour and importer of remittances.¹ The study of Ecuador as a nation of immigrants and emigrants is astutely brought to light in Chiara Pagnotta's well-written Italian monograph, *Attraversando lo stagno: Storie della migrazione ecuadoriana in Europa tra continuità e cambiamento*

(1997-2007). Pagnotta, a historian from the University of Genoa has spent several years crossing the Atlantic Ocean to collect life stories of migrants and non-migrants through fieldwork conducted in three countries across two continents. The analysis takes the reader from several cities of departure in Ecuador, specifically in the provinces of Loja, Guayas and Pichincha (including Ecuador's capital, Quito) to the European cities of Genoa and Madrid, two cosmopolitan cities that have witnessed

¹ Chiara Pagnotta, 2010, *Attraversando lo stagno: Storie della migrazione ecuadoriana in Europa tra continuità e cambiamento (1997-2007)*, p. 28. Cited in Brad Jokisch, 2001, "Desde Nueva York a Madrid: Tendencias en la emigración ecuatoriana", *Ecuador Debate*, num. 54, december, pp. 59-84.

the arrival of large concentrations of migrants.

A theoretical framework, a well-documented historical context of Ecuador in the latter part of the twentieth century, and a variety of oral history accounts infuse the study. This gender-based analysis is viewed through the lens of intersectionality, in other words, from the perspective of power relations exercised in ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality and age (p. 22). The nearly forty life stories of Ecuadorian families interviewed by Pagnotta focus on the transnational lives of women—single women, married women, divorced women, women in common-law relationships, mothers, sisters, daughters, and grandmothers. By underscoring women's experiences, Pagnotta demonstrates that the feminization of migration is not a new phenomenon. For decades, Ecuadorian women have joined the throngs of women who have migrated globally from South to North, and others who migrated within the Southern hemisphere (p. 12). As the author notes, migration is intrinsically related to power relations exercised in Ecuadorian families and the nation's gender-based hierarchical structures. Feminist scholarship has long argued that gender dispar-

ities are recreated and perpetuated in the family. This study demonstrates that families continue to be at the root of gender inequities.

The monograph examines the intersections of gender, class, and ethnicity in sending and receiving communities. It identifies the ways these factors have contributed to migrants' decision over their destination. It discusses whether these dynamics gave rise to a diversity of migrant networks or to parallel spatial and social trajectories among migrants and non-migrants (p. 14). Further, *Attraversando lo Stagno*—meaning “crossing the pond” (in other words, the Atlantic Ocean), brings to light the connections, worldviews, social representations and moral values that collectively underpin Ecuadorian transnational societies. In so doing, it underscores the links that emerge in reality and in discourse (p. 14).

Briefly, Chapter One traces the history of Ecuadorian migration, the project's research methodology, the fieldwork and life stories, and the transnational analysis conducted in Ecuador, Spain and Italy from an intersectional perspective (p. 22). Here, Pagnotta discusses the correlations between sending and receiving communities, and underscores the mi-

grants' experiences and the spaces they occupied, their interactions with the environment, and the views migrants held of themselves and the world. The analysis deftly illustrates ways in which the circulation of goods, money, ideas and lifestyles are vectors for social and economic change in locations of departure and arrival. The second chapter addresses the social and cultural practices of migrants who experienced a duality in identity and belongingness. It also analyzes ways in which migration has impacted the lives of migrants and non-migrants. Pagnotta describes the dynamics that developed internally in the circulation of family migration and the economic ties—namely through remittances—that developed between the places of origin and arrival (p. 74). The third chapter examines national identities in the Ecuadorian diaspora of female migrants who were frequently the first members in their families to leave for Europe. Next, the author examines how ethnic, national and local identities have been transformed in sending communities (p. 140). What emerges is a heterogeneous Ecuadorian identity within a global world. In the fourth and last chapter of

the book, Pagnotta explores the myriad of ways in which Ecuador has changed as a result of migration (with three million Ecuadorians living abroad). She examines who these migrants were, whether they shared an identical social environment, and what their reasons for migrating were. Through three case studies, she describes the life trajectories of migrants, and the tensions that emerged between their places of origin and arrival from a gender perspective (p. 182).

In short, by examining how Ecuadorian women and men have been impacted by migration—with the inclusion of insightful excerpts of life stories, this excellent monograph squarely situates Ecuador and its peoples as part of a global world on the move.

Overall, *Attraversando lo Stagno* by Chiara Pagnotta is well worth the attention of students and scholars in history, migration studies, and related fields in the humanities and social sciences. Its contribution to scholarship is unquestionable. English—and Spanish—language readers will certainly benefit from this study. A translation of the book is highly recommended.