



Remapping and rescaling the religious world from below: The Case of Santo Toribio and Santa Ana de Guadalupe in Mexico

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Abstract

Most discussions about scale are largely silent on religion. They sidestep the issue of a subjective understanding of geography. But places are scaled and rescaled on the basis of their changing importance within imagined and remembered religious landscapes. This article shows how Santa Ana de Guadalupe in Jalisco, Mexico, and the devotions to Santo Toribio that are based there, became a religious hotspot within a transnational religious landscape connecting specific parts of Mexico and the USA. The authors argue that its heightened religious significance rescaled Santa Ana but that religion did not act alone. Santa Ana also lies at the intersection between multiple economic, religious, and political projects that, taken together, greatly enhanced its position within the transnational religious map it helped create.

Keywords

Global, Mexico, migration, popular religion, Santo Toribio, transnational

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Introduction

Until the mid-1990s, Santa Ana de Guadalupe in Jalisco, Mexico was an isolated rural backwater, without schools, electricity, or television, that was barely connected to the outside world by a highway.¹ The town's fortunes changed when Santo Toribio, one of the town's native sons and one of 25 martyr priests killed during the Cristero War, became famous for another reason.² Mexican migrants crossing through the desert or imprisoned by *la migra*³ claimed that Santo Toribio came to them, guiding them when they were lost, enabling them to secure a visa or green card, and helping them find work when they arrived in the United States. As tales of his miracles spread, so did the town's fortunes. A wide paved avenue lined with shops stocked with souvenirs, sweets, and religious paraphernalia now greets visitors who come to pay tribute to Santo Toribio at a shrine containing some of his remains. Although Santa Ana has only 311 official residents, each weekend thousands of national and international pilgrims flood its newly laid sidewalks, transforming it into a key site on the Mexican and the transnational (US–Mexican) religious map.

The idea of global economic cities like London and Tokyo, which are more geopolitically important than the nations where they are located, is widely accepted. But there is also a global religious map, with its own 'hotspots' and power hierarchies, created by imperialist and colonizing powers who also conquered souls (i.e., Spain and the spread of Roman Catholicism, England and Protestantism, the United States and Evangelical Christianity, and Saudi-Arabia and Islam) and which produced global religious capitals like the Vatican and Mecca. Religion, although often overlooked, powerfully influences the creation and reordering of spatial hierarchies.

However, this religious colonization of the world came from above – driven by globally powerful institutionalized religious actors and their armies of religious leaders, teachers, and missionaries (Argyriadis and De la Torre, 2012). In this article, we argue that popular religion, working from below, also remakes the religious landscape. Santo Toribio's followers not only rescaled the sacred map within Jalisco, Mexico, they extended it to create a transnational religious field that now includes regions in the United States where Jaliscienses have settled.

But religion did not act alone in Santa Ana. The town's transformation into an important node within this transnational field was also driven by economic and political changes. The town is located in a region with a long history of emigration to the United States. Jalisco is known as a stronghold of *ranchera* culture, which is marketed actively by the Mexican government as emblematic of Mexicanness. Santa Ana is located along the *Ruta Cristera*, a guided, connected tour of the chapels where nine of the Christian martyrs, also canonized in 2000, were either born or died.⁴ Finally, Santa Ana's location in the tequila agro-industrial region attracts business people and tourists alike and connects the region to Mexican–American transnational networks of commerce and trade.

Therefore, Santa Ana means different things to different people and different interests drive its enhanced status and rescaling. That these differences are all somehow connected to the deep cultural structures that permeate the region mediates their effect. Santo Toribio symbolizes the successful integration of a variety of threads – all integral to the regional mythology and identity (Turner, 1980).

Literature review

Caglar and Glick Schiller (2011: 7) define scaling as the ranking and re-ranking of socio-spatial units into different, though overlapping hierarchies of power. Scaling ‘serves as conceptual shorthand that allows us to speak of the intersection between two processes: restructuring, including movements of various forms of capital, and the reorganization of the relationships of power between specific socio-spatial units of governance.’ A locality’s scale is based on where it lies with respect to the intersecting processes of spatial reordering and economic restructuring. Rescaling refers to this reordering of the spatial hierarchy. Localities jump scale when they assume a much more prominent position than the one they occupied previously.

Most discussions about scale, whether as a structural position or as a networking effect, are largely silent on religion. They sidestep the issue of what Van Dijk (2011: 141) calls ‘a subjective understanding of geographic notions of scale and scalar repositioning.’ They give short shrift to the importance of emotions or imaginaries in rescaling processes because they overlook the role of memory, history, and spirituality (Hirai, 2009). But places also jump scale because of their changing positions within imagined and global religious landscapes. For example, particular hotspots form part of specific national and global circuits of power that, in turn, link them to particular localities (Hirai, 2009: 105). These spots do not just become ‘hot’ because of their economic or political importance but also because of their subjective and symbolic role and their religious significance.

The story of Santa Ana is about how popular religion, acting from below, in combination with migration and other economic and political forces, remakes the spatial status quo. What constitutes popular religion is hard to define because it includes such a broad and heterogeneous set of beliefs and practices. In Latin America, these include worshipping saints such as those protecting drug traffickers, petty criminals, and undocumented migrants as does Santo Toribio (Carozzi, 2006; Chertudi and Newbery, 1978); a belief in reciprocal relations between human and sacred beings (Giménez, 1978); a belief in miracles (HJ Suárez, 2013; AL Suárez, 2015); and pilgrimages (Chertudi and Newbery, 1978; Fernandes, 1982; Shadow and Rodríguez, 1994; Steil, 1996; Steil and Carneiro, 2008). What makes these ‘popular’ is also contested. ‘Popular’ sometimes refers to ‘the majority,’ ‘the people,’ ‘the poor,’ or ‘the uneducated,’ and is placed in opposition to formal, institutionalized religious practices. Its critics reject it as ‘superstitious,’ ‘magic,’ ‘folkloric,’ or as a mistaken weigh station along the way to a more middle-class, modern, educated life (Parker, 1993). Others argue that popular religion has a logic of its own as a powerful arena for resistance and creativity and a source of security and comfort for people facing violence and economic precariousness (Bonfil Batalla, 1990; Gaytán, 2004). In recent years, the Catholic Church has officially sanctioned some popular religious practices or turned a blind eye to others.

Pilgrimages and pilgrimage sites can be powerful engines of rescaling (Eade and Garbin, 2007; Werbner, 2003). Hondagneu-Sotelo (2008) describes, in *God’s Heart Knows No Borders*, an annual political and religious pilgrimage and protest at the US–Mexican border which transforms it into a religious as well as political hotspot. Carrie Viarnes (2008) studied pilgrimages honoring the Black Virgin at the Church of Our Lady

of Regla in Havana, Cuba. Although initially a symbol of European control and power, African slaves and their descendants reappropriated La Regla as a symbol of Afro-Cuban religious identity. Like other 'traveling virgins,' argues Viarnes, 'Regla's journeys have rendered her multivocal, polyvalent, and relevant to an increasingly globalized world and the people who must continue to navigate and make sense of it.' Liliana Rivera-Sánchez (2011) also found that religious *and* economic remittances circulated between Puebla and New York City. Each of these examples shows how popular religion gives rise to new religious hotspots that create and rescale the religious landscape. The ability of particular saints to self-duplicate (*desdoblamiento*) or to be simultaneously in several places at one time is also an important driver of these changes (De la Torre, 2008). Therefore, according to Mary Louise Pratt (2006), although the statue of the Virgen de Zapopan circulates between Mexico and Los Angeles, her ability to move and self-multiply makes her 'a kind of anti-monument, a genuine roving signifier.'

Popular religious practices do not just rescale single localities, they extend them, often across borders. When Mexican migrants bring statues and images with them as they cross the border and resettle, they use them to mark and sanctify their new extended territory (Morán, 2000). In this way, Catholic symbols, removed from their normal habitats, demarcate a new, foreign space and endow it with belief and identities left behind (Segato, 2007).

Pilgrimage sites, like Santa Ana, are often sites of contention. Actors with competing historical and cultural interests remember them differently and have different aspirations for their futures. Because they do a variety of kinds of work for various types of people, struggles over their reframing and over the ways in which memories are narrated and deployed are common (Daugbjerg, 2014; Legg, 2007; Macdonald, 2013). The official national narrative often differs significantly from how ordinary people make meaning and remember (Alderman and Hoelscher, 2004). New memories are produced materially and discursively to 'replace' or contradict official memories and to resist the tendency to forget (Azaryahu, 2003; Muzaini, 2013).

The case of Santa Ana reflects many of these dynamics. As Santo Toribio moves, he conquers and extends his territory, deploying emotional, cultural, and spiritual references that all can recognize. He extends the social imaginary within which Jaliscienses locate themselves by creating a transnational religious field linking Jalisco and particular regions in the US where migrants settle. But Santa Ana is not just a religious site of significance only to Toribio's devotees. It is also a strategic site of other economic, religious, and cultural projects promoted by backers with their own goals in mind. In general, however, these complement and drive forward Santa Ana's popular religious role, thereby further contributing to its rescaling.

The story of Santo Toribio and his chapel

In the late 1980s, tales of the miracles performed by Father Toribio Roma began circulating among migrants and non-migrants living in Jalisco and in parts of the US. The story goes something like this: a man named José came to Santa Ana to express his gratitude toward someone called Toribio. José had tried three times to cross into the US but was always turned back. Although he was out of money and hope, God did not abandon him.

During his last attempt, he met a man named Toribio, who promised to guide him safely to the other side and to help him find work. This is how José made it to America.

Having achieved his dream, José asked his benefactor who he was and how he could thank him. 'I am Toribio and if you look for me, anyone in Santa Ana de Guadalupe will know me,' he responded. Two years later José went to Santa Ana to pay his respects, but when he asked where to find Toribio the villagers shook their heads. 'There is no one named Toribio here,' they told him. 'There is only *el Padre* Toribio who is resting in the chapel' (referring to the small sanctuary dedicated to Toribio where his remains are said to be kept). When José entered, he recognized Toribio's photo, his remains on the altar and some of his bloodied clothes in the showcases.

No one knows the precise origins of this tale. Nevertheless, it spread like wildfire and more and more devotees came to Santa Ana to tell their stories. The community even kept a log of the testimonials of the miracles Toribio performed. Today, over 4 million people visit the region of Los Altos de Jalisco for religious tourism each year. The estimated 600,000 who go to Toribio's chapel in Santa Ana make it one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in the country (Martínez Cárdenas and Mínguez García, 2014). They leave notes with sayings such as, 'Thank you Santo Toribio for helping me cross the desert,' 'Thank you for helping me get a visa,' or 'Because of you, I found a job' (see Figures 1 and 2). While the formal church does not officially recognize these miracles, it acknowledges their importance to believers and skillfully exploits Toribio's fame, by actively marketing religious paraphernalia, including medals, candles, and stamps, and by linking Toribio with successful migration. In 2000, John Paul II officially canonized him for his role in the *Guerra Cristera*.⁵ Because he is an 'approved' saint and a folk saint who is tolerated by the church at the same time, he traverses the formal and informal, the sanctioned and the deviant, and the central and the liminal.

The symbols, myths, and rituals surrounding Santo Toribio have transformed the saint and his image into a spatial marker which signposts a transnational territory spanning particular parts of the US and Mexico. Santo Toribio, with his miracles and charisma, travels to those who inhabit this space in the form of statues bearing his image and via the many stamps, medals, and novenas that are available for purchase everywhere. His heightened prominence, and the spatial reordering it precipitates within this transnational religious geography, is driven not only by the physical changes to this landscape but also by the many material objects and spiritual meanings with which it is associated.

Santo Toribio means so much to so many people because of his physical characteristics, his biography, and because of the strategic location of his sanctuary. The values and traditions with which he is associated work for many different groups. His white skin and clear eyes evoke pride among the regional *criollo* elite. His role as a Catholic martyr enables the conservative religious history of this region, which was silenced for decades within a secular Mexico, to finally be told. His chapel is located within strategically promoted sites of regional tourism and economic development. Finally, he hails from Jalisco, a state with a long and deep history of emigration.

Moreover, Santo Toribio's chapel is connected to several interrelated projects, some national and some transnational, which speak to, and thereby enhance, each other's effects. Taken together, they form a sort of kaleidoscope, allowing residents, pilgrims, emigrants, and tourists to imbue this figure, his sanctuary, and the land where he dwelled,



Figure 1. A migrant's note thanking Santo Toribio for his help to cross the border.

with multiple histories, emotions, and meanings that are all the more powerful because they are simultaneously at work.

One agenda with which Santo Toribio is associated is the preservation and spread of official Catholicism. While many people worship several popular saints at the same time, these veneration always take shape in conversation with formal global Catholicism, which is particularly strong in this region. A second agenda takes shape around *ranchera* culture – its rugged life, its beautiful women, its macho cowboys, its Catholicism, its mariachi, and its tequila. According to Lomnitz-Adler (1995), this regional self-portrait is produced by a set of social relations and negotiations between local class and economic interests, powerful regional and national groups, and transnational migration. The Mexican government, the country's cultural industries, and the export of particular



Figure 2. At Santo Toribio's chapel a note thanking Saint Toribio 'for having granted us the miracle of finding the body of our daughter, who died in the desert of the United States.'

products for which Mexico is famous produced and spread this idea of Mexicanness. And, finally, there is the set of relations and nodes around transnational migration that, like Catholicism, has left a deep imprint in Jalisco and, to this day, continues to transform its social and economic fabric. Below, we discuss each in turn.

All of these agendas are alive in a symbolic, aesthetic, and narrative contest to specify and remake the local countryside. They sometimes complement, but just as often contradict, one other. They emerge from different identity and reaffirmation projects that are part and parcel of everyday life, but are also produced and reflected in the broader plans of the church, government, and regional business interests. Taken together they broaden the interpretative frames in place so that residents and visitors can turn them in different directions and put them to uses other than those for which they were originally intended. They therefore enable Santa Ana to jump scale, catapulting the locality and its sanctuary to greater prominence and status while expanding the parameters of the transnational religious landscape within which it is located.

The sacred land of Christian roots and Christian martyrs and popular folk saints

More than almost any other part of Mexico, Catholicism is rooted in the physical landscape of Los Altos de Jalisco. The region's villages and towns were founded around holy sites and sanctuaries that created a sacred geography and strongly linked them to the global Catholic map and the structures and relations with which it is constituted.

The Catholic missionaries working in this region instilled a strong sense of local consciousness and pride among the regional *criollo* and *mestizo* elite (González, 1983). In fact, one of the church's biggest accomplishments was to imbue residents with a common sense of identity by stressing their shared devotions to the saints and virgins they brought from Spain. With time, these churches and sacred sites became famous among pilgrims and were transformed into important regional sites of encounter. Therefore, the region's sacred and commercial geographies have long been inextricably linked.

Throughout the nineteenth century, ranch owners from the region used the farm, family, and the church to create and maintain a local oligarchy (Fábregas, 1986; López Cortés, 1999). Many families had sons who became priests (Tapia Santamaria, 1986), in part, because there were so many local seminaries where men and women learned to 'spread the word.' The area firmly maintained its pro-Catholic stance and remained faithful to its anti-liberal and anti-socialist roots. Residents opposed devolving power from priests to laypeople and actively blocked efforts by the federal government to encourage secularization.

The Reform Laws, however, instituted by the Liberals between 1855 and 1862 slowly chipped away at the power of the church. They banned public religious celebrations, prohibited religious garb, confiscated church property, and secularized cemeteries. The tension between the church and the state came to a head during the Mexican Revolution of 1910 (González, 2001). During the war the government revoked the church's legal status, forcing it to close its doors to the public. In response, the residents of Jalisco took up arms under the banner of the *La Liga Nacional de la Defensa Religiosa* (The National League for the Defense of Religion). The League members referred to themselves as *Cristeros* because they fought in the name of Christ the King. Between 1926 and 1929 thousands of villagers and ranchers in Los Altos joined this Christian battle; many of whom were persecuted and killed.

The war ended in 1929 with a pact between the clergy and the President of the Republic known as the *Modus Vivendi* (Loaeza, 1988). And while this tragic episode is often left out of official textbooks and histories in other parts of the country, the Catholics of Los Altos made sure the residents of this region remember (Meyer, 1973). Their fierce commitment, combined with their strong devotional and liturgical fervor, guaranteed that the region's Christian past would be preserved even when the state wanted it forgotten. Small, informal sanctuaries, little chapels, and crosses dot the landscape in places where martyrs fell.

In fact, Santo Toribio's family members, some now deceased and others still living, worked hard to promote his fame as a martyr and later as a guardian of migrants. Because some relatives belonged to the regional elite, they were well positioned to pressure government and religious authorities to support their efforts to honor his memory. His cousins Estefanita and Asunción, who were charged with guarding his remains, kept a record of all the miracles that were attributed to the future saint. In addition, the local priest, Father Gabriel, based for many years in the community, worked actively with the church and with business leaders to produce the material objects (stamps, medals, candles, t-shirts, etc.) that spread Toribio's fame. He convinced the owners of *Athletica*, a sportswear manufacturer in a neighboring town, to open an outlet store in Santa Ana, hoping that soccer fans would visit the chapel when they came to buy discount clothing. In this

way, he incorporated fandom and sports paraphernalia into the religious assemblage that heightened Santa Ana's profile. He used the money raised from these sales to improve Santa Ana's roads, churches, and amenities.

In 2000 the political landscape in Mexico shifted dramatically when Vicente Fox, of the *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN),⁶ was elected president. It marked the end of the liberal, sometimes anti-clerical era, during which the legal rights of Catholics to worship were not recognized. It also signaled a prominent role for the Social Christians on the political stage. Against this backdrop, Catholics, conservatives, and the residents of Los Altos de Jalisco saw the canonization of the Christian martyrs as an opportunity to rewrite official history, finally including within it the *Cristero* struggle. According to Luis T González, the former mayor of Jalostotitlán:

It was a triumph for us, for our way of living. Many people from outside the region call us the persecuted *alteños*, but time proves who is right. I think that after years of fighting, armed or otherwise, and of trying to maintain real Catholic values, we see that history is on our side.⁷

The subsequent creation and promotion of the *Ruta Cristera*, a Christian religious tourism route, was also part of the rescaling process. For many Jaliscienses, the canonization of the 25 *Cristero* martyrs in 2000 represented an opportunity for a historical rematch between devoted Catholics and their secular opponents. It enabled residents to re-consecrate the region as a place of embattled but strong Catholicism and to elevate it as a holy land purified and sacralized by the martyrs' efforts. A history that had been silenced by the federal government, or which had only been described in terms of 'heroic deeds' by secular liberals, could now be spoken about. Being able to speak about this history also strengthened the connections between Los Altos and other strongly Catholic regions of the country as well as with the global Catholic world.

Recognizing an opportunity to attract more visitors to the region, the Jalisco government implemented a plan to promote religious tourism. A government study suggested that Catholic pilgrimage traditions could yield important economic rewards (Martínez Cárdenas, 2011). The state, it said, should expand what were already popular destinations into a wider circuit including shrines and churches dedicated to the *Cristero* martyrs,⁸ such as Santo Toribio (Figure 3). In fact, one of the most important national pilgrimage sites, San Juan de los Lagos, is located in Los Altos de Jalisco. This sanctuary, founded in the seventeenth century, lies at an important regional and economic crossroads.⁹ An estimated 4 million believers from the region and other parts of Mexico, return migrants, and international pilgrims already visit San Juan de los Lagos each year. To encourage visitors to go beyond San Juan and Santa Ana the government invested in infrastructure and promotion, even designing a 'touristic passport,' including the other sites.

Not surprisingly, the sites along the *Ruta Cristera* also attract large numbers of migrants who, until recent changes in the economic and political climate, which we discuss below, could easily visit their home communities or pay their respects to Santo Toribio (Hirai, 2009). Religious tourism also promotes other kinds of tourism. Visitors are directed to shops selling traditional arts and crafts. Signs advertise restaurants specializing in local cuisine. Visitors can also tour tequila factories where they sample brands made in the region.



Figure 3. The *Ruta Cristero* near Santo Toribio's sanctuary.

Unfortunately, the project has not succeeded as the government had hoped. While state officials proudly showcased the land where 'Christ was revindicated' (Martínez Cárdenas, 2011), the federal government balked at such public displays of religiosity. In addition, the region still lacks adequate infrastructure and amenities, including a well-maintained highway connecting the various sites. As a result, most pilgrims simply go straight to the sanctuaries of San Juan de los Lagos and Santo Toribio Romo (Rogelio Martínez, personal communication).

The strong Catholicism, which is so fundamental to the identity of the *Alteño* (as people of the region are also called), ensures that the region remains a stronghold of Christian political mobilization. Religious history and memory, as well as current faith commitments, make Santa Ana, and the surrounding area, ripe for a prominent position in this real and imagined sacred landscape. Not only are its residents in sync with its religious and economic projects, the physical and material landscape is full of the accoutrements needed to realize them. The fact that Santo Toribio is simultaneously embraced as a popular saint and an officially canonized saint reinforces his prominence and also enhances Santa Ana's position.

Remembering and preserving *ranchera* culture

A second complementary force driving rescaling, created from elements more closely associated with the region but also strategically deployed by the Mexican government as its international face, is that of *ranchera* culture. Jalisco actively distinguishes itself from other parts of the country on the basis of this heritage; it is the foundation for its claim to be the true embodiment of the Mexican nation.

Some economic and social characteristics of Los Altos de Jalisco do set it apart from other parts of the country. The landscape is semi-desert. Ranching and commerce are the principal economic activities, in contrast to farming which is more common in other parts of the country. The residents of Jalisco, many of whom are said to have descended from Sephardic Jews or the French, are known for their light skin and blue eyes, which clearly differentiate them from their *mestizo* and indigenous compatriots. A sense of racial superiority, a tendency to have large families, and high levels of endogamy characterize the social fabric in this part of the country. The many family members of Santo Toribio, who actively promoted his fame, are part and parcel of these traditions.

The highly creolized regional culture that evolved, with few indigenous traces, is a source of great pride and nostalgia. In fact, Jaliscienses claim to represent the pure essence of Mexico – that Mexicanness is what Jalisco is all about. In the second half of the twentieth century, Los Altos de Jalisco became known as the birthplace and bedrock of *ranchera* life and *criollo* culture – a genealogy actively promoted by the media and the Mexican film industry (Florescano, 2004). Images of beautifully dressed men and women, tequila and mariachis were created as a sort of allegorical stamp or postcard that is reproduced everywhere – on napkins, flyers, calendars, and in the materials advertising various products that also symbolize Mexicanness, such as traditional sweets, beer, salsas, and tequila (see examples below). At the same time, the *ranchera* songs sung by the mariachi etch in stone the character of the brave and macho Jaliscan cowboy. Record sellers, television variety shows, and radio announcers actively promoted this type of song, especially the XEW, *La Voz de la América Latina* (The Voice of Latin America). The Mexican film industry also exported this portrait of the nation.

The expanding tequila industry also drove forward the central role of Jalisco in the creation of this idea of Mexicanness. Transnational corporations took what had been a locally produced and consumed beverage and successfully inserted it into the global market. As tequila became more and more popular, production also had to increase to meet the growing demand. Fields previously devoted to cattle raising were now dedicated to growing agave. Regional leaders successfully fought to get Jalisco recognized as tequila's official 'region of origin,' which gave local producers an advantage on the national as well as global market. Brands like Patrón, Don Julio, Cazadores, and Siete Leguas became internationally recognized. According to the National Academy of Tequila, by 2000 tequila had become popular around the world. In the United States, it represents 4.5% of all of the alcoholic beverages consumed and 1.5% of drinks consumed internationally.

All of these threads come together to create an image of the *Alteño* that has become an important icon of national folklore, displayed in the halls of national culture through song and dance but always firmly rooted in the soil of Jalisco. These images, tastes, and sounds continue to be deeply associated with the region, in large part because the elements used to create them are so easy to modify and modernize. The central role of Jalisco in the creation of this official version of Mexicanness, as well as the federal government's and the cultural industry's active role in its circulation and spread, also drives forward the increased prominence of Santo Toribio and his sanctuary. His legacy benefits from Jalisco's central role in the export of this official narrative of the nation.

Transnational migrants with Santo Toribio as their guide

Los Altos de Jalisco has one of the Mexico's highest rates of emigration to the United States. The devastating economic effects of the Cristero War caused many men to join the *bracero* program or to seek work in the agro-industries of the United States.¹⁰ Emigration's deep roots profoundly transformed the region's social organization, economic base, and customs (Durand and Massey, 2003). According to recent surveys, about 1.4 million Jaliscienses live in the United States and about 2.6 million of the Mexicans born in the United States have roots in the region. Almost every resident in Jalisco has a family member who lives in the US. The state is the third biggest recipient of remittances after Michoacán and Guanajuato. In the municipality of Jalostotitlán, where Santo Toribio's sanctuary is located, it is estimated that half the population of working age 'lives on the other side' of the northern Mexico border.

When Santo Toribio was first canonized migration was still considered temporary – a way to earn enough money to return to Mexico and live the good life (Arias, 2011). Although many migrants eventually became citizens of the US and no longer wanted to return, each year thousands came back to visit their communities of origin for the annual patron saint day celebrations prior to the militarization of the border. In many small towns, the 'day of the migrant' is celebrated at the same time as patron saint days (Durand, 1998; González de la Rocha and Escobar Latapí, 1990).

In the last decade, Mexican migration has changed dramatically. A 2015 report by the Pew Research Center found that more Mexicans are leaving the US than entering the country (González-Barrera, 2015). According to El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, while in 2007, 855,083 people entered the United States, by 2014, the number had dropped to just 164,621. The 2007 economic recession, the tightening of the border controls and immigration laws that make it more difficult for people to cross and return safely, and the threatening presence of gangs and drug dealers, help explain these declining numbers. Moreover, because so many children of Mexican immigrants lack documentation, they cannot travel easily between Mexico and the US.

To the extent that it is still possible, migrants continue to return to their communities of origin. Their visits constitute important economic injections into these communities and are often occasions when major physical and social improvements are made. They are also sites of re-encounter between return migrants and their non-migrant family members where strong ties of belonging and continuity are reactivated and strengthened. The rituals and observances migrants perform, around saints and their home communities, allow for a sense of socio-cultural continuity within this context of spatial rupture. They also drive forward the rescaling of Santa Ana as well as the heightened prominence of sites in the US where Jaliscienses have settled.

Migration has transformed the countryside in conflicting ways. Some people spend remittances to remake the landscape to resemble what migrants want to remember, a kind of Disneylandification driven by memory. Other monies go toward creating hacienda-style towns and converting fields previously used to grow corn and raise cows into agave plantations. The institutions and businesses that support transnational lifestyles also dot the landscape, including money transfer agencies such as Western Union and restaurants serving food from the United States (including Tex-Mex, pizza, hamburgers, sushi, and Chinese food). Therefore, two sometimes conflicting processes are at work. Los Altos

has become an iconic symbol of the nostalgic *ranchera* past, idealized and codified by culture industries and by remittances (Hirai, 2009). At the same time, it has also undergone significant transformations, moving from family farm to agro-industry and experiencing the social fragmentation caused by migration and industrialization (López Cortés, 1999).

The Mexican government and the Catholic Church are, of course, in on the act. Because so much money changes hands during annual patron saint day festivals, the government has not only converted religion and pilgrimages into tourist attractions, but also it encourages migrants to return, all the while carefully preserving the tone and aesthetics migrants long for. Migration-driven changes are enhanced and even trumped by the creation and recreation of government-backed efforts and events related to '*la tierra a la que todos quieren volver*' (the land to which all want to return). Since the church knows that so many of its members live transnational lives, and it relies so heavily on their financial contributions, it also cares for family members on both sides of the border and runs an active *pastoral de los migrantes*, an arm of the church that protects and provides for migrants. It uses its organization on both sides of the border to speak to migrants and non-migrants at the same time (FitzGerald, 2012).

Despite changing migration patterns, devotions to Santo Toribio remain strong. Among the nearly 12 million people of Mexican origin who live in the US, there are many Jaliscienses who revere him who have settled along the West Coast and in Texas. The pilgrims who purchase the images and souvenirs bearing his likeness often give them as gifts to family members, friends, and fellow Mexicans who use them as talismans and amulets as they cross the border or struggle to make ends meet in the United States. Santo Toribio makes and marks the transnational social field connecting migrant and non-migrants, traveling physically and spiritually within in it via the statues, medals, and knick-knacks that bear his image. He has become the patron saint of migrants (Figure 4).

Today, there are altars and chapels to Santo Toribio all over Mexico, including the principal border cities Tijuana and Ciudad Juárez. There are also altars in many US states dedicated to him. Since 2014, an image of Santo Toribio, said to contain some of his remains, travels each July to different parishes in California. In Tulsa, Oklahoma, where a small chapel dedicated to Santo Toribio opened in 2008, a 4.2 mile procession takes place in his honor every year, complete with bands, Aztec dances, and horseback riders (Fricker, 2014).

All of these activities transform what was a national veneration, from a particular region of Mexico, into a transnational one. With each circulating icon, figure, or devotee, this cross-border religious space is asserted and broadened with the chapel in Santa Ana at its center. The fact that Santo Toribio self-duplicates (*desdoblamiento*) and is so amazingly mobile and portable counteracts the heightened limits to migrants' physical mobility.

Conclusion

Toribio's presence as a domestic cult has spread far and wide. His image hangs in homes, cars, workplaces, small grocery stores, and businesses, and graces small altars in people's homes. There are now chapels dedicated to him in other migrant-sending communities as well as in churches and hospitals throughout the United States. At the same time,



Figure 4. Santo Toribio: patron saint of migrants.

the construction of new chapels in his honor in Mexico has not stopped. The chapel in Jalostotitlán, in the Los Altos region, has the capacity to receive millions. Santo Toribio's rise to fame, and the rise of Santa Ana's fortunes along with him, then, broadens and deepens the transnational religious field connecting the US and Mexico and firmly establishes Santa Ana as a central hotspot within it.

But religion does not act alone. The region's role as exemplar of *ranchera* culture, the major industrialization it has undergone, its integration into domestic and international markets, and the long-established US–Mexican migration circuit also drove Santa Ana's repositioning forward. The multiplier effect of these various projects simultaneously at work is greater than the sum of their individual parts. While Santa Ana is neither Mecca nor the Vatican it has moved from a place of marginal spiritual and economic significance to a more central location in the transnational religious field it helped to create. Various historical and economic threads animated its repositioning that, when woven together, give rise to a broad imagined spiritual and emotional territory that many could enter.

By emotional territory, we mean that Santa Ana and its surroundings are imbued with meaning and associated with spatial and cultural icons that migrants and non-migrants readily identify with and which are tools for creating transnational communities. The memories and symbols associated with Santo Toribio are markers of what *Alteños* hold dear: the physical features which differentiate them from indigenous and *mestizo* Mexican residents, the popular and official Catholicism that celebrates *Cristero* struggles and transforms the countryside where they took place into a holy land, and the features of everyday ranch culture that are icons of Mexican national identity. The sanctuary in Santa Ana, and Santo Toribio whom it honors, becomes even more appealing because it offers visitors an encounter with regional history. This shared history, driven forward by

migration and by modernization, is accessible to all, even though migrants, those who stay behind and those who cannot return, experience it differently.

Therefore, while Santo Toribio does different work for different audiences, the emotional landscape his followers use him to create is flexible and capacious enough for everyone. Scaling and rescaling are produced by the relationships between historical, economic, and religious forces and between the people who live or remember them. Not only is Toribio present in the religious landscapes his followers imagine and in his sanctuary, but he travels as well – to home altars, hanging off the rearview mirrors of buses and cars, in small chapels in hospitals and neighborhoods, and in the businesses that bear his name. Santa Ana's importance continues to grow not only because followers and return migrants want to visit Toribio's sanctuary but also because he can travel to them – present in sanctified replicas and statutes that easily cross to 'the other side.'

As a result, Santo Toribio's sanctuary in Santa Ana is a fixed place, full of memories, of the hope of return, of nostalgia. But it is also a place of economic progress, mobility, and transnationalism. What is more, Toribio's journeys create new, replicated places in the communities where *Alteños* settle in the United States. The mobile symbol of Santo Toribio and his sanctuary helps to connect the distinct levels and sites of this transnational community and to moderate the frequent negotiations between the local, regional, national, and international aspirations of its inhabitants. Although seemingly contradictory the nostalgia for *ranchera* culture that is eroded by progress and modernization is counteracted by the pilgrimages, migration, and tourism that strive to preserve it – all aptly combined in Santa Ana and thus explaining its remarkable makeover and enhanced role in the transnational religious map.

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Notes

1. Santa Ana is located in the municipality of Jalostotitlán, Jalisco, in a region known as Los Altos de Jalisco.
2. The Cristero War was an armed struggle involving Catholics defending their faith and the political liberals and anti-clerical factions of the Mexican government seeking to destroy it in western central Mexico between 1926 and 1929. During this period, religious gatherings of any kind were prohibited as were any public manifestations of faith. Priests and their followers gathered clandestinely but were shot if discovered.
3. '*La migra*' is slang for a United States border guard who tries to prevent Mexicans without documents from crossing the border.
4. Of the 25 martyr priests who were canonized by John Paul II in 2000, nine were born or died in the Los Altos de Jalisco region. That is why so many temples in their honor have been constructed there.
5. Interestingly, during his lifetime, Toribio was a fervent opponent of emigration, as was the Catholic Church in general, which feared that it would stimulate 'foreign ideas and U.S. attachments introduced by returnees. These ideas, the church believed, endangered the purity of Mexican culture and even Mexico's very existence as a sovereign state' (FitzGerald, 2009: 76).

6. The PAN represents the conservative right wing of Mexican politics.
7. Interview conducted with Fernando Guzmán and Renee de la Torre (De la Torre and Guzmán, 2010).
8. They are known as *Cristeros* because they fought to defend the Catholic faith against the Mexican army. Their revolutionary anthem was 'Viva Cristo Rey.'
9. It is surrounded by mines and large farms, its agricultural, ranching, and manufacturing sectors are thriving, and an important commercial fair takes place there each year (Romero, 1992).
10. Jorge Durand wrote that the principal factors prompting emigration from the region were the railroad line to El Paso, Texas, overpopulation of the region, and the demand for Mexican labor in the United States. The most important cause, however, was that after the Cristero War the region's economic base had been destroyed and many people who had participated in the struggle felt insecure at the hands of the Mexican army (Durand, 1998).

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