

# Ethnic projects of Yalalteco youths and adult living in Mexico City's Metropolitan Area

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María Bertely Busquets †\*

## Abstract

By the 1940s, far from reporting the assimilation and full incorporation of the schooled and literate sectors of Villa Hidalgo Yalalag, Oaxaca, to Mexico's national culture, being *letrado* (literate), became consolidated as an attribute of social distinction within and outside the village, as well as a resource of intermediation and ethnic distinction. This paper documents the persistence of strife in the cultural groups, gestated by older generations and, in particular, the way in which this historical strife created dispositions and recreated family loyalties, and with younger generations among the youths who foster new ethnic projects. This contrasts with a group generated only by youths, in which they seek to overcome conflicts among families and factions in favor of their generational expectations and interests, and another group in which the ethnic boundaries are broadened due to the social exclusion they face every day, as well as their subordinate position and class. Thus, this paper not only exemplifies, in an *in-case* study, how ethnicity is strengthened through the fragmentation of initiatives deployed in historically conflictive cultural and political arenas, where inherited intra-ethnic confrontations motivate their permanent updating in new spaces and life contexts: it also documents, in the case of the youths of the Dance Group, their interests and expectations in the confluence of their family histories, their generational adscription and new life options offered by transnational migration, globalization and modernity.

**Keywords:** ethnicity - youth - identities - family trajectories - transnational migration

## Introduction

By the 1940s, far from reporting the assimilation and full incorporation of the schooled and literate sectors of Villa Hidalgo Yalalag, Oaxaca, to Mexico's national culture, being *letrado* (literate), became consolidated as an attribute of social distinction within and without the village, as well as a resource of intermediation and ethnic distinction. Gradually, the knowledge as well as the symbolic and material assets acquired in state and federal school facilities underwent a process of

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\* Research Professor. CIESAS-Mexico City.

appropriation controlled locally and were put at the service of the political factions that monopolized and shared the use of power in this Zapotec village.<sup>1</sup> In an early stage of insertion into urban life, the migrant families and youths who arrived in Mexico City's Metropolitan Area (ZMCM) developed several ethnic initiatives in which the strife among factions and historic sides has tended to continue into modern times.

This paper partly documents the persistence of this strife in the cultural groups developed by adult generations, and in particular the way in which this historical strife creates dispositions and recreates loyalties with the families and older generations among the young people who promote new ethnic projects. This contrasts with a group created only by young people who want to overcome the conflicts between families and factions in favor of their own generation's expectations and interests, and another group in which the ethnic boundaries broaden due to the conditions of social exclusion they face every day, as well as their subordinate and class position. We have intentionally omitted the first names of the promoters and members of the ethnic initiatives developed in this insertion stage, which may be defined as foundational with respect to the creation of new ethnic settlements in Mexico City's Metropolitan Area, between the 1960s and the 1990s, after the first Yalaltecos living near the Shrine of Guadalupe, in the Gustavo A. Madero district of Mexico City, as well as in Ciudad Netzahualcóyotl in the State of Mexico, began to meet to "spend time together" following "regional", "traditional", and "folkloric" practices. A first moment of this stage had to do with the creation of the Asociación Yalalteca de México (AYM) in 1964, while the second corresponds to the formation of the Banda Filarmónica Yalalteca de México in 1977, as well as the Grupo Oaxaqueño and the Grupo de Danza San Felipe, in the 1980s. This latter group was formed exclusively by youths.

This article does not only exemplify, in an *in case* study, how ethnicity is strengthened through the fragmentation of initiatives deployed in historically conflictive cultural and political arenas where inherited intra-ethnic confrontations motivate their permanent updating in new spaces and contexts of life: it also documents, in the case of the youths of the Grupo de Danza, their interests and expectations in the convergence of their family trajectories, their generational affiliation and the new options of life offered to them by transnational migration, globalization and modernity. In methodological terms, personal archives, letters, communications and several testimonies related to family and school trajectories tell the story of some life situations that shape the subjectivities of the protagonists, before and after they emigrated. These subjectivities, framed in specific *habitus*<sup>2</sup>, have an impact on their reasons for and styles of inserting themselves in the

1 Beyond the fact that there are relatively stable denominations for the political and administrative districts in Oaxaca, in this article I refer to Yalalag as a "village" (*villa* in Spanish) because it is the head of the municipality and its name – Villa Hidalgo Yalalag – includes this term. In the town's history, its status as a village was established due to its important commercial, social and demographic position relative to other places in the Sierra Norte region of the state of Oaxaca.

2 The *habitus* refers to incorporated forms derived from their class condition, as well as the conditionings this condition imposes. The class has to do with a number of agents situated in homogeneous conditions of existence that impose conditionings, systems of dispositions

cities, as well as on the ethnic initiatives fostered, and give their school learning and grades as well as written Castilian,<sup>3</sup> specific social, political and ethnic uses that, in the case of youths, involve new knowledge in professional fields related to accounting, business management, computers and marketing, among others. In the ZMCM, the permanent articulation and disarticulation of Yalalteco ethnicity is expressed, among others, in three basic patterns of formal organization: (i) the pattern generated by literate migrant dynasties seeking to protect their economic and political interests in the village, (ii) the pattern gestated by schooled youths and professionals who unite and update their ethnicity referents vis-à-vis their generational interests, modernity and the process of globalization, beyond the conflict between factions, and (iii) the pattern structured after the state of urban marginalization in which the most impoverished sector of the migrant Yalalteco population survives.<sup>4</sup>

These patterns of formal organization contradict the structural anthropological approaches that contrast traditional social forms, community organization, and the feeling of belonging to a distinct people, with attributes characteristic of citizenship linked to urban modernity, corporate ways of organization, and individualism. In fact, Yalaltecos and city youths combine seemingly opposite attributes and referents of identification and, as Anthony Cohen argues, national policies and symbols are adapted and reinterpreted according to political, social and idiosyncratic interests (Cohen, 1985: 37, 73-74); thus, ethnicities emerge as a sort of pastiches or *bricolages*. Following Pierre Bourdieu, past experiences, political circumstances and the structure of events intervene in the shaping of ethnicities (1988: 54, 172). In ethnogenetic terms, the existence of these ethnic amalgams or alloys implies a permanent shaping and reshaping of emblematic referents whose mix is always different, due to the conflicts and threats involved in homogeneization in contexts of cultural inclusion and exclusion. Youths, even when their generational condition is imposed on them and when they make an effort to leave behind conflicts between families due to strife for control of ethnic-political power, mark their distinctiveness in the city.

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and homogeneous practices, which have a series of common properties, objectivized and sometimes guaranteed by law, such as the possession of assets or powers. These conditions are incorporated as the habits of a class and, in particular, involve classifying systems and schemes (Bourdieu, 1988:100).

3 While the school grade refers to the official certification obtained after studying or completing a school grade or major, mastering Castilian – and not Spanish – alludes to a condition of citizenship legitimized through “Castilianizing” educational policies. These are not aimed at the “Spanishing” of the subjects of education, but to their “Castilianization”. Both conditions are assumed as necessary in the projects of national unity.

4 L. R. Hirabayashi identifies two adaptation strategies adopted by Zapotec migrants from the Sierra of Oaxaca in Mexico City: the associations of mutual support and common interest organized around a shared place of origin, and the need to help migrants defend themselves from the negative conditions of the city. The latter found expression in the ethnic urban associations constituted by the migrant elite, interested in protecting their economic and political interests in their hometowns. Hirabayashi makes a further distinction between organizations founded in the workplace, informal ones and formal ones (1981: 3, 41). This contribution is based on the analysis of formal organizations, including the strategies mentioned.

## The Asociación Yalalteca de México

To “echo” the festivities that take place in Villa Hidalgo in the Yalalteco community in Mexico City, Maximino Mota created the AYM in 1964. The association was formally founded on November 20, Mexico’s Day of the Mexican Revolution, in a sort of identity amalgam between *being Yalalteco* and *being Mexican*. At the beginning and every year, to celebrate the association’s anniversary, some relatives and *paisanos*\* have contributed from 25 to 100 pesos each to bring the Banda de Música de Yalalag to Mexico City. Out of the 21 people who participate in this initiative – all of them adults – ten maintain strong economic interests and loyalties with the most powerful factions in Yalalag: four from the Mota family, two from the Venegas family and four from the Aquiles family (Pers. Arch. 95. Letters, 1970). To the cost paid by Maximino Mota to support “his hometown”, with donations, acolytes, trophies and trips from the city, are added the expenses he has made since the time before he founded the AYM to support the “community” festivities in the city. In December 1960, “to serve to the *paisanos* in the neighborhood” on the feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe, he had to buy 24.5 liters of mezcal, 35 cases of beer, pots and dishes, napkins, toothpicks, cartons of cigarettes, two kilos of soup, chiles for the *mole*, five cases of Coca Cola, coffee, sugar, half a pig, bread, chickens, two bundles of charcoal, wood, and canvas, as well as pay for the fuel and rent of a truck, which added up to 5,210. 25 pesos (Pers. Arch. 84. Letters, 1960).

Starting in 1964, to invite people to this kind of celebrations, the AYM has made public announcements in Spanish, as was the case of the “happy get-together” organized by the association in Mexico City on the feast of Saint John the Baptist and held on a day close to the one on which it is celebrated in their hometown.

### GREAT YALALTECA NIGHT IN MEXICO CITY

Due to the celebration of the Traditional and great Regional Fair to be held starting on the 19th of this month in the Town of Yalalag, Oaxaca, to honor Saint John the Baptist, its patron saint, the Yalalteco Association of Mexico, echoing the rejoicing of our *paisanos* and the desires of the Yalalteco community residing in this Capital City, invites you and your distinguished family to its great Feast and Ball to be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of this month at 8 p.m. in house No. 5127 of street Norte 60A, Colonia Río Blanco. In this happy Yalalteco Get-Together you will find all kinds of dishes from our hometown, including the indispensable “Jarabe Yalalteco”. Do not miss it: besides meeting friendly people and *paisanos*, you will have a great time.

Mexico City, February 1965 (Pers. Arch. 87. Announcements AYM, 1965).

Other issues were also announced in good written Castilian, and thus this language functioned as a vehicle for communication that strengthened ethnicity or, in other words, the ethnic links and referents of the Yalalteco community in the city.<sup>5</sup> According to Benedict Anderson, the

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\* People from the same hometown (Translator’s Note)

<sup>5</sup> About the use of a lingua franca as an instrument of ethnic expression for migrant minorities living in urban areas, see Clyde Mitchell’s study *The Kalela dancers living in a city in Rhodesia, having been schooled, sing their songs in the lingua franca, unlike the tribes who sing them*

most important aspect of written language is not the language itself but its capacity to generate communities (1993:189). In this case, the written Castilian provided by the national State and government schools was put at the service of ethnic empowerment. But the AYM, besides creating “ethnic echoes” in Mexico City, also required communications written in Castilian so its directive board – made up of adults – could call “*paisanos*”, in general, to gatherings where such echoes turned political when dealing with the “most important issues of our town”. Maximino, thanks to his good Castilian, wrote them.

### RESPECTFUL INVITATION

Dear paisano:

Once again the Yalalteco Association of México, through its directive board, invites you to discuss issues of great importance for our hometown such as the serious problem faced by our secondary school, our library, the construction of the town's electric power grid and other issues pending to be solved. We will also have a visit from a great teacher from Mexico's National Pro-Libraries Commission. As always, we remind you that it would be of great help if you and your family accompany us and give your opinion about all this. (Pers. Arch. 93. Announcements, 1969).

Because of such infrastructural needs and reasons, in a process of *urban insertion and territorialization* that might be characterized as *centripetal*, the hometown remains the nexus through which the processes of ethnic self-adscription are shaped and reshaped. Hence, the AYM holds monthly meetings in the facilities of the Mártires de Río Blanco, the workplace of a teacher who lives – like the rest of his *paisanos* – in the neighborhood of the same name. The meetings aim to “work together for a better Yalalag” (Pers. Arch. 93. Letters, 1969), and in fact Maximino was “comisioned” to deal with major community commitments and fulfill different functions of intermediation such as the ones that the municipality's president and *síndico* assigned to him after appointing him “main *padrino*”, next to the Governor of the State of Oaxaca and “other figures” from the Minor Roads Commission and authorities of neighboring towns in the inauguration of a bridge built over the river Yalalag. For the same reason, municipal authorities invited, through the AYM, two Army generals and a captain and, in particular, the local congressman of the Mártires de Río Blanco neighborhood, saying that he “has been cooperating with our dear town of Yalalag” (Pers. Arch. 91. Letters, 1967).

The education of children and the new generations is a priority, and in 1970 the members of the City Council led by Juan Aquiles, the teachers of the school, the members of its Parent-Teacher

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in their mother tongue. This makes their message intelligible not only for people in the city but also for other ethnically and linguistically different groups that find in the language of the majority a means of inclusion and distinction (1956). In contrast with that case, although the AYM uses the lingua franca to make announcements, these are limited to the Yalalteco community, thus ensuring ethnic control on issues related to their hometown.

Association and the official of the Seventh School Zone in Yalalag asked Maximino for his financial support to build a new elementary school in the village, after the existing one had been damaged by torrential rains. For this reason, the engineer of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Program to Build Schools (CAPFCE) found a new location for another school and asked the community for stones, gravel, sand, lime, wood and 30,000 bricks (Pers. Arch. 94. Letters, 1970).

To the ethnic and political initiatives developed by the AYM in favor of their hometown from Mexico City, through which the control exerted by a particular faction over the City Council, the school, the church and public life, among other spaces, is strengthened, were added Maximino's negotiations in favor of a large number of neighbors made up of migrants from the state of Oaxaca and other states in Mexico. As neighbors interested in acquiring pieces of land in the east of Mexico City and the neighboring State of Mexico, some *paisanos* suggested integrating the AYM into the Federación de Colonias Proletarias. After some meetings held in the Casas Alemán and Mártires de Río Blanco elementary schools, the two groups were unified in the Unión de Colonos Mártires de Río Blanco, with an office on Avenida Inguarán, a few meters from Maximino's house (Pers. Arch. 98, 99, 100, 101. Announcements, 1971). The integration of ethnic associations into organizations from the city itself such as the neighbors union mentioned suggests that the distinction was mobilized by different political motives, means and goals, amalgamating multiple senses of belonging and identification. Therefore, until his death in 1985, Maximino Mota put his *being Yalalteco, literate, schooled and a city neighbor*, among other personal attributes, at the service of diverse interests.

### The Banda Filarmónica Yalalteca de México: the political diaspora<sup>6</sup>

In the late 1920s, the self-taught "maestro" Alberto Montes Lezama, lyricist and musical arranger, created the first and "only" musical band in Yalalag. His self-teaching included ways of learning and doing things typical of indigenous pedagogy, founded on learning by doing and observing how more able adults do it. In this manner, the master inherits the "gifts" of his parents and grandparents working in music, fixing instruments and copying musical scores. As a child, he complied with his father's demands and spent his nights "copying and copying" in ink, by candlelight, a great number of scores. He learned, in short, by practicing.

Through his efforts he learned to sing scales and, at the age of 17, besides "instrumenting", he composed music for bands and participated in the Cultural Missions promoted by the Mexican State, identifying himself with the nationalist actions aimed at "rescuing" indigenous peoples and incorporating them into the mainstream of civilization. The dissemination and teaching of marches, civic songs, *rondallas*, military songs, waltzes and *pasodobles* in the towns of the northern sierra of Oaxaca led young Alberto into difficult and dangerous situations, and to assume with a

<sup>6</sup> The information in this section was taken from an interview with Edmundo Montes (16, Nov. 1995: 47-73).

nationalistic attitude the task of “convincing communities” to “collaborate” with the educational project of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>7</sup> His travels through towns in the states of Oaxaca and Tlaxcala left in him indelible memories and important political teachings on how the actions promoted by the national State might benefit the local and regional power held by different factions, which meant that the “rescue” project promoted by young Alberto was placed at the service of nationalistic ideas and factionalism.

After marrying and resigning from the Cultural Missions, the now *Don* Alberto combined supervising work on his lands with forming music bands in nearby towns. Inspired in his travels, he composed hundreds of pieces similar to the ones played by military bands of the time. Two of his sons, the eldest one and Edmundo, began to play at the age of seven in the “only band” of the town, led by their father. Edmundo played the saxophone and he remembers how, at such a young age, his father “dragged” him to play in the band.

Unlike his older brother who only completed his elementary education in the village’s federal school, Edmundo studied secondary school in the only school that offered this level in the town: a private school run by nuns. Don Alberto, as a bilingual, liberal and progressive musician, demanded his children speak Castilian, forbidding the use of Zapotec. However, when they attended school they played with their classmates in Zapotec and often, for there was always someone who “accused” them with their father, came home to a beating. Don Alberto’s attitude is partly justified because the schools on the village taught in Castilian. Among a large number of monolingual Zapotec students, his children stand out for their success in school, shared by the children of the five or six families who spoke the national language by then. Without any conflict to communicate in school, and free from the family and community responsibilities that youths in a subordinate condition must assume, Edmundo still identifies himself as a young person and waits eagerly for the arrival of tropical music groups in the town’s festivities. He created, “out of his own initiative”, a similar group with other youths with him on the saxophone, another one playing a bathtub, another one a piece of wood and wicker, and others play rattles.

While Edmundo “played at being a musician”, his father joined the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and became part of one of the factions that alternate in holding local political power in the village. The life of the Montes family went on “normally” until in 1972 there were serious

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<sup>7</sup> Guy P. C. Thompson mentions that, although music about the Mexican Revolution is identified mostly with the “corridos”, the permanence of music bands since their introduction in the second half of the nineteenth century until the twentieth century is significant. In rural towns, music bands are associated with the professionalization of active military personnel, with the war between Mexico and the United States, and with the presence of the Hapsburgs in Mexico in the nineteenth century. Since then, these bands have formed in strategic places and recruited townspeople to encourage their participation in the army and/or politics. Commanding officers in the National Guard, political officials, school teachers, patriotic associations and musical groups are expressions of the changes brought about by the Liberal Reform in the relationship between the heads of the municipality and their population. Playing marches, anthems, civic and military songs has an important political significance in the dissemination of liberal ideas. Bands are an expression of “civility” and “civilization”, replace religious rituals and processions, and recruit a significant number of people in favor of native “cliques” trying to impose a given political project, while “waltzes” and “pasodobles” preserve the French-influenced legacy typical of president Porfirio Díaz’s regime (1990: 34, 42, 51-55).

disagreements between the factions in power due to the formation of a new one, self-proclaimed “campesinos” (“peasants”), that emerged from an alliance with a sector of the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC). This alliance re-articulated the relationship between native factions and the national State, and finally the “campesinos” displaced the faction of the PRI to which Don Alberto belonged.

From Edmundo’s perspective, although the side of the “campesinos” represented, like that of his father’s, the “newly rich”, “open” and “schooled” from Yalalag, in contrast to the “poor” “illiterate” and “closed” ones excluded from the political life of the town, their triumph placed the Montes on the opposite side from that of Joel Aquiles. Beyond his generational interests, Edmundo’s life was structured after this fact, and the displacement of political forces led to Don Alberto’s migration to the city of Oaxaca, and later to Los Angeles, California.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the political displacement of the Montes family, Edmundo has appropriated the “pride” of having been a musician in “the only band from Yalalag”, distinguished in the great feast of the Guelaguetza held in the city of Oaxaca. This pride accompanied him when he arrived in Mexico City in 1974, where he once again tried to find a space for his generational interests by creating a tropical music group with his cousins. The weight of his father’s expectations and the interests of his faction prevailed, and Edmundo took “supplementary” classes at the Escuela Superior de Música, where after two years he obtained a certificate as a concert musician. By then he had made clear his preference for classical music, so he left the tropical music group due to “differences of ideas”. Meanwhile, his father had organized the Banda Filarmónica Yalalteca in Los Angeles, California.

Edmundo was resting at home in the Inguarán neighborhood of Mexico City when a group of eight older *paisanos*, members of the AYM, visited him unexpectedly. Due to his “experience and studies”, they invited him to “conduct” the city’s music band. He eagerly accepted and promised to “form and conduct” this band because with this alliance there was a truce between the political faction of the “campesinos”, led by Joel Aquiles, and the political counterweight that exiled members of the PRI still seemed to represent. In other words, a decade after the creation of the AYM, the factions at strife asked young Edmundo to make a truce, and to that end they created a common fund to help them deal with the expenses required.

To create the band in Mexico City more than 60 prospects were recruited, some of them older and some younger men who studied scales on books and played instruments bought by the common fund.<sup>9</sup> While Edmundo worked on the instrumentation, the common fund invited Don Alberto to teach music to literate and illiterate students. Don Alberto traveled to Mexico City from Los Ange-

8 Although in the case of another town in the Sierra region of Oaxaca L. R. Hirabayashi claims that the richer families do not emigrate, political problems within Yalalag constitute one of the most important factors that lead wealthier families to leave town (1981: 83).

9 The fact that the instruments belong to the bands is interpreted by Guy P. C. Thompson as an expression of the community obligations that accompany membership. Although the music bands spread liberal ideas founded on individualism, voluntarism and active citizenship, they are organized around the predominance of community interests. This reveals the divergent views on what being a citizen means in the new liberal states and active public life. While citizens are supposed to act autonomously and voluntarily, their membership in a philharmonic band imposes on them constraints controlled by a faction that impede their individual behavior (1990: 56, 59).

les, formed a band of 46 musicians, and they first played for the community on November 20 1977.<sup>10</sup> In turn, thanks to his school grades and mastery of the saxophone, guitar, piano, accordion, double bass, mandolin and most of the wind instruments played by the bands, Edmundo also supported the creation of the philharmonic band of Los Angeles.

As was to be expected, some members of the AYM belonging to the side of the “*campesinos*” started to regard the Banda Filarmónica as dangerous and contrary to their interests. In fact, thanks to the resources provided by the common fund, the band began to strengthen the political power of the faction in exile through the integration of different de social classes and the creation of a “feeling of unity” around the “properly Yalalteco”, which acted “counter to the chiefdom in Yalalag”. Moreover, in this arena de internal political and ethnic confrontations, ethnic unity was taking shape around a philharmonic band that displayed its preference for “traditional” music – which clashed with the music preferred by younger people, faced with the emergence of newer musical trends – and at the same time, regardless of the heterogeneity of the class, generational and educational conditions of its members,<sup>11</sup> they all coincided in the idea that staying in the town, even after having attended secondary school, made people stay “closed”.

Faced with the fragmentation and confrontation between political factions, the AYM disappeared temporarily, but the philharmonic band remained for many years as the “only band” in the annual cycle of ethnic festivities in the city.<sup>12</sup> Recreating the paternalistic relationship with his father, Edmundo defended the existence of only one band because without them “the *paisanos* are left as orphaned children”, and when in the 1980s and 1990s other bands were created, not only in the city but also in Yalalag, Edmundo himself declared that such diversity was a symptom of internal political division.<sup>13</sup> In this political arena, and in defense of this unity,<sup>14</sup> the Banda Filarmónica took advantage of the

10 Don Alberto is to be credited for the creation of several music bands in Yalalag, including a “young boys’ band”, of the philharmonic bands of La and Los Angeles, as well as the production of two records. This distinction is shared by paisanos like José Buenaventura, director of the Banda de la Fuerza Aérea Mexicana and collaborator of the philharmonic band in Mexico City.

11 While Edmundo belongs to a new generation of professionals and emigrated to the city to “get ahead”, the current makeup of the philharmonic band is heterogeneous in regards to the age, schooling and social class of its members. Although their average is 28, some are “younger” and some “older”. The “older” ones have little schooling because in the past most worked “harvesting and selling”, whereas some of the younger ones are lawyers, engineers and “all kinds” because families “care more about schooling”, “not just elementary and secondary school”, and worry about defining the profession their children will practice in the city.

12 This cycle took place in the Alcaldía@2 Gustavo A. Madero and included the feast of Saint John the Baptist, held in June at the top part of the Cerro del Chiquihuite known as La Presa, the feast of the Virgin of the Rosary held in October in Cuauhtepc Barrio Alto, as well as the anniversary of the extinct AYM celebrated on November 20 in Villa de Guadalupe.

13 In the case of Puebla, Thompson documents that when a philharmonic band was formed in the Sierra in the second half of the nineteenth century its leadership was expected to represent the whole community rather than a faction of the town (1990:56). In that respect, in the Progressive Reform of Yalalag, carried out by the literate sectors in 1938, one of the obligations was to create a “single music band”, in order to avoid “disorder” and “anarchy” (pers. arch. 1. Acts, 1939).

14 In his study of indigenous migrants from Oaxaca in the Valley of San Quintín, Baja California, Rhett Mariscal argues that alliances to compete in better conditions within an encircling society require leaders who act as middlemen between their followers and the State. Leaders begin to obtain power through their negotiations with state agencies, tend to monopolize negotiations, and cause an unequal access to the individual guarantees of their paisanos. This base of organization tends to reproduce the paternalistic model of the Mexican government, in which many of the indigenous leaders acted as political middlemen (1997: 15,16).

annual festivities to circulate documents written in Spanish whose main aim was to “unite to help the town”.<sup>15</sup> In particular, these materials provoked the anger and discontent among subordinate migrants, also identified and united around other projects, interests and demands. New initiatives were generated both by indigenous youths from the city and from subordinate migrants.

## Grupo de Danza San Felipe: renewal of ethnic referents and youthful rebelliousness<sup>16</sup>

In contrast to the group described above, under the control of adults and older men, the Grupo de Danza San Felipe was made up of fourteen young men between the ages of 15 and 30 who live in the Delegación Gustavo A. Madero, in Mexico City, as well as in nearby areas in the east of the State of Mexico.<sup>17</sup> The area has all the public services, paved streets, educational centers that go from elementary schools to higher education institutions (Escuela Nacional de Estudios Profesionales, Unidad Aragón), big shopping centers and recreational facilities, large parks and gardens, as well as different options for land transportation including microbuses, city buses and the metropolitan subway system.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike the Banda Filarmónica, where most members are “friends” or “paisanos” allied to the political faction in exile that integrates a sector of illiterate people opposed to the chieftom in the village in Oaxaca, the membership of Grupo San Felipe gathers in the same cultural space children of opposing factions. And despite the fact that the current leader of the group belongs to the Montes family, the displaced political faction, a descendent of the Aquiles family – now in power – appears among its founders. In contrast to the other groups, subordinate to the interests of their own factions, the youths argue that the “unity of the community” can only be achieved by leaving behind “confrontations between sides”.

Inherited mistrust and political grudges, even when the children are not unaware of the serious events that motivated them, must be left behind. A necessary forgetfulness when, in “such

15 In a study by L. R. Hirabayashi, some families from the town of La Loma in the Sierra organized in the late 1950s a group to support the development of their town from the city, obtaining the support of the government in their plans and projects. The group sought to promote this development in its own terms and under its patronage and leadership. By then, two contrasting groups had arisen: one with power in the region and political links in the city of Oaxaca, and the other with the moral and economic support of the federation and the city's bureaucracy (1981: 60).

16 To make a general profile of the members of Grupo de Danza San Felipe we gathered the data from the collective interview conducted on August 15 1992, as well as pieces of information collected in our field work.

17 Most of the related members live in the San Felipe de Jesús neighborhood, after which the group was named, while others live near the Oceanía and the Puebla metro stations or near the Palacio de los Deportes. The only “friends” who are not related to anyone in the rest of the group are brothers Saúl and Pedro Domingo. Saúl lives, like the other members, in the east region of the State of Mexico, while Pedro lives “far away” in Cuautitlán Izcalli, to the north of the metropolitan area. According to Larissa Adler de Lomnitz, “physical proximity and trust” are basic factors that favor exchanges and reciprocity between urban migrants (1975: 28).

18 In fact, the cost of land in this area has increased, leading some of the poorer families to emigrate to peripheral areas like the Valley of Chalco (personal communications).

a small" community, what really matters is to bring the families related to the factions in conflict together to reinvent the past for the sake of the present.<sup>19</sup>

What characterizes this group is an aspiration of "unity", despite the fact that they are also under a process of internal distinction between related youths, who meet every Saturday, and "friends", whose attendance to group activities is irregular. Moreover, when blood relations and lineages are involved in the shaping of factions, the last names and family affiliations of brothers, cousins and uncles are always mentioned, while the identification referents of the occasional attendants are usually forgotten.

Out of 14 youths, half were born in Villa Hidalgo, so they regard themselves as "*made in Yalalag*" – sometimes in English to allude to their contact with Los Angeles, California – and their birthplace seems to be part of the way in which they consider themselves to be speakers of Zapotec and Castilian, or monolingual in Castilian.

As for their patterns of social and economic reproduction in the city, most members of the dance group combine school with work in households,<sup>20</sup> family businesses, or employment in areas linked to the urban labor market: accounting, business management, computers or marketing, chemical engineering or tourism, among others, and their participation in the group depends on the "possibilities" of each member. These "possibilities" imply an economic distinction insofar as they require their families to have enough money to make or buy costumes and acquire different ritual objects. Even among those who remember facing economic hardship when they arrived in the city, their distinction demands they spend money, time and effort in favor of the group. Suffice to say that by 1998 the cost of a mask went from 200 to 800 pesos, while costumes cost over 1,000 pesos. The impact of groups such as this one in the internal circulation of money is important, especially when the annual festivities require the work and products of relatives and *paisanos*, which in the case of dancers imply making and buying clothes, huaraches and wooden masks, among other items.

The educational level of the youths in this group goes from secondary school in the case of "friends" to higher education, in the case of those related. A small number of the latter opt for technological degrees such as electricity or electronics, while the rest is about to start, currently studying or has finished majors in areas such as engineering, information technologies, veterinary medicine, graphic design, psychology, music and tourism at the Instituto Politécnico Nacional and the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México or the Universidad Iberoamericana. Some take up complementary courses, such as English as

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19 Juan Mota Montes is both the uncle of the Mota brothers – sons of Maximino Mota, the founder of AYM – and of Oswaldo Álvaro Mota and Eladio Andrés Chano, as well as cousin of the Pinto Medrano brothers, of Salvador Matos Mota and of the Matos Buenaventura brothers, all members of the Grupo de Danza San Felipe.

20 Two of the members do not fit into this pattern: one works as a mechanic and another in artistic activities linked to theater, dance, television, radio and experimental films.

a foreign language, while Salvador, trained as a professional in the arts, becomes one of the major intellectuals in the group.<sup>21</sup>

Those who are related have some advantages in regarding themselves as the descendants of “princes” and being the younger child in families of seven children on average. This distinction affords them better economic prospects and opportunities to study than those their friends and older siblings have and, at the same time, adequate living conditions to disseminate, renew and update their ethnic distinction in the city.

Despite the differences within the group, all its members identify with it due to their age range and the fact that they maintain permanent links with Yalalteco youths in the United States. They are a new generation of qualified technicians and professionals influenced by transnational migration, new information technologies and a globalized culture that, precisely because of these influences, are more capable of updating their ethnic referents, in contrast with the traditionalism that characterizes other groups.

The participation of the youths of this group in an encircling society is part of the definition of cultural project that counter the centripetal force exerted by Yalalag over the AYM and the Banda Filarmónica Yalalteca de México. In contrast to the cultural groups under a process of centripetal attraction around their hometown, the project of the youths responds to the *centrifugal attraction* generated by a process of *transnational territorialization* under new economic and cultural dynamics, defined by the possibility of having a dual nationality, as well as continuing to be Yalalteco after migrating through Mexico’s northern border. These youths discover and reinvent a shared tradition and claim that their group, formally created in the late 1980s, “does not have a starting date” and “works as it always has”. Thus, placed in a continuous and anonymous time that contrasts with the personal cult inspired by the ethnic initiatives of the elders and the adults, these youths acknowledge “a large number of *paisanos*” or “important elements” who brought Yalalteco dances to the ZMCM. But to avoid controversies they make no mention of the families who preceded them and allude instead to “*paisanos* who come and go”, to preserve and recreate “within and outside the country” what they call “an anonymous heritage that has to do with ancestral times and our roots”. It is thanks to the continued anonymity and forgetfulness that the youths can organize autonomously and reinvent their sense of urban ethnic unity, in which there are no longer leaders or directors, but “people in charge”. The “older” people in charge are replaced by younger ones after they turn 30 years old, and often become advisors or occasional assistants while they generate or become part of other ethnic initiatives in the ZMCM and the USA.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike the traditional dances performed by the dance group that always accompanies the philharmonic band, like “Negritos”, “Negritos Colmilludos”, “Jarabe Yalalteco” and dances “for chil-

21 Some majors are explicitly useful to “preserve the tradition”, such as sculpture, to make wooden masks, or music, for the training of “guides”, “maestros”, “directors” and “people in charge” of the dance and music groups. Some of these professionals are paid for their cultural services.

22 A dynamic that contrasts with the leadership style in another group of young dancers, “Los Lezama”, which depends on the Banda Filarmónica and shares the cult to Don Alberto Montes Lezama, after whose maternal surname they are named.

dren" like the San José dance, the San Felipe group presents dances influenced by their contact with the USA and transnational migration: "Los Mojados", "Los Cholos", and "Los Hipis". The children in particular watch these new productions with interest and curiosity, trying to "guess" who is hiding under the masks and costumes, whose legs, feet, or eyes they see. That is "the trick" of the "goofy modern" dances, where the performers appear to hide while the audience tries to unmask them.

This *top secret* seems to be supported by a cultural process that has been both sedimented and renewed, which implies learning to act and blend with an "other" without uncovering the underlying, hidden identity of the other one. In the words of the youths, "it's like going to the cinema", so that the actor can convince the audience of the veracity of the role he plays. This game of identities motivates the "interest", "fright" and "laughter" of the observers, who wonder and cannot guess who it is.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, as Irving Goffman argues, interaction is a game of performances (1993:29) in which hiding is a strategy that allows participants to cope with intercultural relationships mediated by conflict, negative discrimination and domination.

The performance of the "goofy modern" dances involves some elements of parody. Besides masks and wigs, the youths use photographic cameras, leather jackets, white coats, Brand name sneakers and jeans and, when they dress as women, purses, high heels and patent leather shoes, stockings, street clothes and "big boobs" filled with cotton under tight T-shirts. These dances are defined as "organized" and "assembled" productions based on the constant renewal of cultural parody. These performances or parodies are not stable but dynamic, and have allowed ethnically distinct towns like Yalalag to deal with the conflictive dialog with Europeans and people from other communities in Oaxaca in the past, and with actors identified with the United States and migration in the present.

But the renewal of their ethnicity referents has had some costs for this group. When they accepted to participate in a public tender for state funds to foster cultural diversity in the city, promoters of the first initiatives like the Chano family accused them of "selling out" and forgetting that the dances are performed "for the fun of it" and not for money. They have also been criticized for not acknowledging the *paisanos* who preceded them, and also because their presence in festivities seems to be haphazard, in contrast to the continuous presence of the Banda Filarmónica de México and the traditional dance group that accompanies them. The elders and other adults define the Grupo San Felipe dances as "cheapening" and "rebellious", and their performances are met with suspicion and even interrupted due to a disagreement between "what should be performed out of respect for tradition" and what the "goofy modern" dances require.<sup>24</sup>

23 The cultural use of the mask recalls the concept of actor coined by Irving Goffman, who argues that when an individual appears before others he projects, consciously or unconsciously, a definition in which his concept of himself becomes an essential part. When something that from an expressive perspective is incompatible with the impression provoked by the acting individual takes place, there are interruptions, momentary disorganizations and different disruptions in the interaction (1993:45).

24 In his study of the dances performed by migrants of different African tribes living in cities, Clyde Mitchell argues that older generations are less interested than younger ones in the broadening and renewal of their ethnic referent, a dynamic that is to some extent explained by the participation of

Members of this group explain and did not publicly acknowledge their ethnic belonging until they were young adults, after being silenced in their use of Zapotec by their families and having attended monolingual government schools. Today, with school grades, being “equal to any other Mexican youth” and “respected as professionals”, they see themselves as “*más chingones*” – that is, better – than non-indigenous youths. It is under these conditions that they update their ethnic distinction through a process that might be defined as an urban *reindianization*.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, although most of them work in jobs not related to their academic qualifications – having had a technical higher education, higher education or being professionals – the “respect” derived from them affords them better conditions to disseminate and renew their ethnic referents not just in the city but also in the United States.<sup>26</sup> That is why they renamed their group as “Grupo de Danza Amanecer”, with strong implications for gender relationships in which young urban Yalalteco women seem to find new horizons and options for fulfillment in their professional, family and romantic relationships.

### Grupo Oaxaqueño: urban marginalization<sup>27</sup>

It is important to take into account that not only the youths seek to overcome historic conflicts and the centripetal force exerted by their hometown on other ethnic initiatives. There are other motives behind the invention of traditions, as well as in the gestation of unprecedented and innovative ethnic projects that arise due to the confluence of trajectories and interests such as those that emerge in living conditions marked by migration. Such is the case of some twenty Yalalteco families who have lived since on the higher part of Cerro Cuauhtepac, on the northern boundaries of Delegación Gustavo A. Madero known as Colonia Malacates, whose members also seek to overcome the conflicts and strife for power in Yalalag, in this case through a broadening of ethnic frontiers.

At the same time as they built their houses with concrete bricks or asbestos, they worked quickly to build a shrine, the chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary, which could serve not only people from Yalalag but also migrant neighbors of Zapotec origin, other people from Oaxaca, as well as neighbors from other Mexican states. To that end, they built a three-square meter room at the end of one of the hill slopes, and a committee collected the money contributions

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the youths in processes of literacy and schooling. Their ability to articulate dispersed tribal elements and to make new spaces for ethnic identification in an urban context stems precisely from their mastery of the lingua franca (1956: 11-18).

25 J. E. Jackson, in his study of the Regional Council of the Vaupés Indians, shows the impact of Colombian indigenistic government policies in this process of indianization, in which the members “become indian” when they arrive to the city, where being a “real indian” is not as important as “appearing to be one” (1991).

26 It is possible that these youths, as they become adult, discover silenced linguistic and cultural knowledge. In the case of the Zapotec language, social spaces of adult interaction require its use and, as the case of Edmundo shows, its everyday practice may take auditory learning to the realm of speech.

27 The information about Grupo Oaxaqueño A.C. is taken from field work conducted in 1995.

of the neighbors to buy a statue of the Virgin. Since then, a group of *paisanos* has organized the corresponding feast in the last weeks of October. This religious festivity, together with the one held in June by another group of *paisanos* in La Presa, is part of the annual cycle of the ethnic celebrations of the Yalalteco community in the city.

The contrast between the conditions of urbanization in the space where these groups meet and live is striking. By 1996, Delegación Gustavo A. Madero was in a range considered regular in regards to basic needs not met, including cumulative basic patrimony, income level and access to services like transportation, paved roads, housing, water, sanitation, electricity and schools (Blanco, López and Rivera, 1997). In the same classification, however, living conditions in Colonia Malacates were far from regular. Buses and minibuses departed from the Metro Indios Verdes station, traveled along Acueducto de Guadalupe, got to the lower part of Cerro Cuauhtepac and, going uphill by steep streets with as much as a 45 degree slope, ended their route before the place where the families from Yalalag lived.

The conditions of the streets on the upper part of the hill get especially worse in the rainy season. In contrast, the streets in the lower part are wide and paved, whereas uphill they become narrow, irregular, bumpy and dusty paths. From the large malls and restaurants frequented by the middle and higher classes of neighborhoods like Vallejo, Lindavista and Torres de Lindavista, commercial activity is reduced to small retail stores until it practically disappears.

Most of the houses of Yalalteco families are made of bricks without plaster, with cement or metal roofs, and some are not completely built. From there, the visual landscape is similar to the one seen from Yalalag: mountains, scattered houses, animals in the backyard, nopal cactuses, a little corn grown for their own consumption and little vegetation. People walk through dirt streets, cement or dirt stairs and terraces, or narrow, steep and muddy paths where there are frequent accidents.<sup>28</sup> But beyond the similarities with Yalalag, the social exclusion these people face is expressed in the imperfect ways in which they insert themselves in Mexico City, where they suffer severe social, economic and political inequalities.<sup>29</sup> Without school documents or certificates, they are employed in manual, unskilled labor jobs as porters, clerks and servants when they arrive in the city. Their informal employment depends on the relationships their *paisanos* and relatives have established with city dwellers in houses, factories, and stores.<sup>30</sup>

28 Much like in Villa Hidalgo, accidents are frequent due to falling because of the steep slopes or the bad conditions of the streets.

29 According to Larissa Adler de Lomnitz, one of the connotations of the concept of marginalization has to do with the entropy and the economic, political social disparity within systems in an accelerated process of industrialization. Marginalization is concentrated in dependent areas and remains in the primary centers. Marginalized groups work in low-productivity activities, sub-employed or unemployed, when "modern industrial production requires a set of qualifications and knowledge that allow only a privileged layer of the working sector to find employment in it". In this author's view, marginalized people are left with a "number of lower salary jobs: manual, unskilled jobs in the construction industry, in cleaning, security, repairs and maintenance, house cleaning and undervalued occupations, relics of the traditional economy" (1975: 20).

30 Among the kind of jobs in which poorer people from the Sierra find work, Hirabayashi includes house cleaning, work in restaurants, public restrooms and barber shops, shoe cleaning, and truck loading and unloading (1981:22). As for the importance of "documents" in urban

Thus, although these adults and their families gravitate in a marginal occupational circuit and work in unskilled and socially devaluated jobs, they do not participate in niches or exchange networks that allow them to survive as relatively successful household production units, as is the case with other migrants (Adler de Lomnitz, 1975).<sup>31</sup> This contrasts with the strong economic networks of the families organized around the manufacture and selling of clothes, and with the ethnic renewal expectations that characterize the youths in the Grupo de Danza San Felipe.

Adult inhabitants of Cuauhtepéc start at the bottom in areas of work controlled by city dwellers and, not having school certificates, their careers depend on the “trust” their employers deposit in them thanks to the “recommendations” of their *paisanos*. In contrast to those who have school studies and trajectories, these Yalaltecos move upwards thanks to the knowledge and skills they acquire “in the practice” and gradually have access to better positions in formal and informal economic activities that take place in closed and restricted spaces. Moving slowly upwards in jobs such as printing, bakery or pharmaceutical product delivery, these Yalalteco adults are trapped in relationships of servitude that prevent them from having access to the basic guarantees they should have as Mexican workers and receive salaries that do not exceed the minimum wage. In some cases, these salaries are set as “commissions” or irregular income.

After reacting to the mirage of the city they had believed to be real and becoming aware of the relationships of exploitation and servitude they endured as unskilled workers, the *paisanos* of Cuauhtepéc Barrio Alto found in their ethnic referent an incentive to survive in better conditions in the city. Therefore, the basic aim that led them to hold the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary annually, as well as the creation of Grupo Oaxaqueño, A.C. in 1986, is to “rescue Zapotec culture”. “Promoting the unity of Zapotecos in the city”, as stated in their conversations and documents, is related to their interest in fostering both the local market of goods and services and the networks of reciprocity and exchange in a neighborhood inhabited by marginalized workers.<sup>32</sup> Constituting themselves as a civil asso-

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contexts, indigenous migrants from Oaxaca in San Quintín require them for their land ownership. Such documents include their birth certificate, employment contract, certificate of residence in the Valley and proof of not owning property. Lacking documents prevents migrants from having access to state services, and being unschooled and illiterate imposes severe limitations on their employment (Rhett-Mariscal, 1997: 14).

31 According to Hirabayashi (1981), taking unskilled jobs as a negative impact on the reinforcement of mutual aid patterns and leads to the development of individual strategies of job promotion in the city, as documented in the case of the marginalized urban Yalalteco sector.

32 Based on a study in Chile quoted by Adler de Lomnitz, the reciprocal exchange of “favors” is believed to constitute a basic resource to preserve the life status of a social stratum without a solid economic foundation (1975:25). The same paper argues that physical proximity and trust are two factors that favor exchanges. The former determines that “the greater the proximity, the more social interaction and opportunities for exchange”. Trust, on the other hand, ensures the capability and desire to establish the exchange, the obligation to fulfill that relationship, and the mutual familiarity required to avoid being rejected (1975:28). In a different case, Rhett-Mariscal argues that among indigenous migrants in San Quintín the demands of organized Mixtecos are linked to their condition as agricultural workers. Indigenous

ciation, they also aspired to participate more equally, as citizens and independent small business owners, in a city that seems alien and hostile to them.<sup>33</sup>

Although the feast mentioned above is “for Yalaltecos”, the Grupo Oaxaqueño attracts not only the *paisanos* of Cuautepéc but also all the migrants from the Zapotec Sierra region and towns near Yalalag.<sup>34</sup> Broadening the Yalalteco ethnic referent to the “Zapotec” and “Oaxaqueño” is ethnically and regionally defined as identifying *paisanos* who share the same class condition, as William Rhett-Mariscal argues in the case of indigenous migrants from Oaxaca living in the Valley of San Quintín, Baja California (1997). By the end of the twentieth century, among its thirteen members were eight Yalaltecos, including a woman who prepares the food for the feast, and three *paisanos* from Santiago Camotlán, a neighboring town. Modifying the ethnic limits established formally, two of its members are from the town of Dolores in the state of Hidalgo, from the state of Guanajuato and from the state of Mexico respectively, and they are all identified as *being neighbors*, suffering from social exclusion and similar living conditions.

Those who have worked for the group as presidents, secretaries or treasurers have always been Yalaltecos, except for one of the three treasurers who is from Camotlán. However, all the Yalalteco families living in the east of the ZMCM, plus the *paisanos* in Cuautepéc and “all the neighbors of the place”, whether they are or they are not from Yalalag or the Sierra of Oaxaca, are invited to the feast. Neighbors call this celebration “the feast of the people from Oaxaca”, and more than three hundred people take advantage of the gathering to sell different products in improvised stands. Mechanic amusement rides are installed a few blocks from the place, and everyone recognizes “the progress of the Oaxaqueños compared to the ones who live downhill”. In this respect, the Grupo Oaxaqueño distinguishes itself from the other groups because it brings together people interested in generating and strengthening exchange and reciprocity networks to help them improve their living conditions and compete more equally within an encircling society.<sup>35</sup>

The group meets at the home of their current “president”, known as “the house of the neighborhood”. The house is located across from the shrine, which has become a church thanks to the work of the community to avoid “losing the tradition”. The work required to improve the material structure of the houses, such as the concrete roofs and the paving of the streets, depends on the-

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coalitions, such as the one of the Triquis, are not as interested in working conditions in their native communities as in their rights as marginalized Mexican workers suffering severe economic, social and political injustices (1997: 17).

33 In his study of indigenous migrants from Oaxaca living in San Quintín, Baja California, Rhett-Mariscal argues that their civil associations represent a type of non-profit corporation that enables organizations to have a legal personality and obtain Mexican national funds such as those of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista as well as international ones more easily (1997).

34 Both the broadening of their ethnic referent and the aim of uniting *paisanos* from different towns are similar to the objectives of tribal African movements documented by Clyde Mitchell (1956).

35 Although the exchange and reciprocity networks among relatives and neighbors are the “social resource” of the marginalized to survive in the cities, such networks may “coexist with the market exchange in complex societies”. Kinship, neighborhood, *compadrazgo* (relationships between godparents) and male friendship “are so many other institutions that adapt to the urban situation and integrate with an ideology of mutual support” (Adler de Lomnitz 1975: 26, 27).

se support, solidarity and reciprocity networks.<sup>36</sup> These networks participate in providing access to temporary jobs, although they do not ensure the increased circulation of goods and services. Thus, the Yalaltecos of Cuauhtepac know well the *paisanos* who are “major businessmen” and “men of wealth”, while their names and crafts are unknown by and in little demand for such men. The poverty, dispossession and exclusion they suffered before emigrating, including their family and school experiences, as well as the difficulties they faced during their journey to and insertion in the city without having “school documents”, form part not only of the shaping of a particular *habitus* through which they establish the objectives, affiliations and limits of their community adscription, but also of what they expect of the schooling of their children, many of them young.

In this case, according to Larissa Adler, the imbalance of the original ecological niche corresponds to the first stage in the migration process, characterized by the disturbance of the ecosystems in the place of origin and its effects on different regional and occupational sectors (1975: 29). Among the members of the Grupo Oaxaqueño, the crisis of the coffee industry in the late 1950s had negative repercussions on the agricultural and commercial activities of some of them. In their childhood, this imbalance also affected previous ideological and cultural ecosystems due to the great value attributed to being literate and schooled, in contrast with agricultural work, the secularization of public life and the monetarization of the economy, among other factors.

Juvencio, Benjamín and Rogelio, as adults and parents, like all the other members of the Grupo Oaxaqueño after overcoming the mirage that was their arrival in the city and in some cases the suffering and exploitation they experienced as “wetbacks” in the United States, found in the recovery of their ethnic referent the hope of survival and social mobility in the city not only for them but also for their children – including the youths – and attributed specific ethnic uses to the schooling and professionalization of their children. As in the Banda Filarmónica Yalalteca, whose members gathered to participate from their exile in the strife between factions and the confrontations for control of local power, the Grupo Oaxaqueño “serves the interests of poorer *paisanos*”, who share similar stories, who came to live in a “horrible and ugly” zone where the support between *paisanos*, relatives and neighbors becomes indispensable. Hence Juvencio, after telling his five children “what happened to me”, asked his elder to choose between getting married or continuing to study after finishing secondary school. She opted for studying, went to high school and later studied a major in Law at ENEP-Iztacala. She knew that, as a future lawyer, she “had to help her poorer *paisanos*” because, as part of the dispositions learned within her *habitus*:

36 In the case of the paving of the streets, the neighbors of Cuauhtepac Barrio Alto negotiated the delivery of materials in exchange for community work, supported by Mexico’s SEDESOL through the program known in 1998 as “Solidaridad”. The streets where the “Oaxaqueña community” lives were beneficiaries of the program, unlike others where neighbors do not have networks of reciprocity based on exchanging favors. This pattern of reciprocity is similar to what is known in Yalalag as “gozona”, a reciprocal exchange of labor. It is however different from the “tequio”, defined as compulsory community work done by neighbors for the improvement of the village. While the gozona is done spontaneously and domestically, the tequio is seen by subordinate sectors as an obligation imposed by local authorities upon illiterate inhabitants of the village.

The parents and grandparents of some were musicians, and they are musicians too. The parents and grandparents of others were workers, and they are too. But we, the poor, also have our reasons, and so it is important that we work together and unite [...] They all had somehow the same life I had in Yalalag. We left Yalalag for a reason: for lack of work, lack of moral support, for many situations. Because a rich person does not leave town. The poorer ones are here for a reason and they need lawyers. I tell my daughter, "When you graduate, your degree must help poorer *paisanos* like me... just like that, disinterestedly". She tells me, "Everything I can do, God willing, I will manage to get ahead with this profession (22, VII, 1995: 103-104).

Benjamín, thinking of his children, mentions the value that *being hard-working* has for this sector of the population:

Our ancestor workers, the old working men who, at one in the morning, with men, children and women, were already cultivating the cotton flowers, hard at work cleaning the cotton, taking it off the flower, hitting it so it grew and making thread for the. They were very hard-working, those ancestors: tanning leather, walking two or three hours to get to the field, carrying sticks, bringing the water. At one in the morning the mothers ground the corn even twice, made tortillas and woke up their husbands. At two in the morning they were already having breakfast because the fields were at the edge, two or three hours from the house (31, VIII, 1995: 150-151).

## Conclusion

The ethnic strategies built by Yalalteco migrants to adapt to the city and the meanings they attribute to their particular projects arise from contrasting family histories: the particular conditions that led them to emigrate, the way in which their school and class backgrounds facilitated their access to material and symbolic assets provided by the State and the society encircling them, as well as their ethnogenetic capacity expressed in the maintenance, broadening or renewal of their identity referents and ethnic emblems.

The networks with ethnic-political objectives are created mostly by the literate dynasties for whom written Castilian, schooling and professionalization have an impact on the maintenance of their ethnicity and the relationships between migrants. Schooled and professionally trained city youths related to such dynasties renew their ethnic adscription referents and invent new traditions that allow them to update and operate successfully within a globalized and transnational culture. In contrast, for the subordinate schooling and professionalization are used as means to create networks of neighborhood support, solidarity and reciprocity that allow them to improve their living conditions in the ZMCM.

Unlike what Julio de la Fuente argued about the networks of support and reciprocity being established among "all the *paisanos*"; "people from the place" or "brothers" (1965: 24), the ethnic

strength of the Yalaltecos is maintained and renewed through the division and fragmentation of projects, as well as the encounters and clashes between individual and collective interests, both in their hometown and in the city. Alliances, to some extent temporary, allow them to overcome their differences and rivalries in favor of these interests, always aiming to maintain an imagined community (Anderson, 1993).

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