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**La migración afrodescendiente en el Norte de Chile, 2000-2015:  
Identidad, estrategias de integración y mecanismos de  
exclusión/inclusión de la sociedad receptora**  
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## Summary

Chile has been experiencing important economic growth since the 1980s, turning it into one of the most prosperous countries in Latin America. With the return to democracy in 1990, the country also regained high levels of political and social stability that still makes it stand out among the countries in the region. All this has caused an important level of migration of citizens from other Latin American countries, all wanting to take advantage of the economic prosperity and political stability that characterises Chile.

The important increase in foreign immigration over the last ten years has led to increasing debate in Chilean public opinion about the possible economic, social and cultural consequences of this phenomenon in the country.

One of the aspects that has most attracted the attention of locals has been the arrival of a large number of people of Afro-Latin American origin, who are visibly different to the mestizo phenotype dominant in the country. These are mainly immigrants from Colombia, Haiti and Ecuador.

The topic of migration has not, however, taken over the Chilean political agenda as it has in several European countries. However, it is evident that, little by little, politicians, civil society and the media have become increasingly aware that migration needs greater attention to be paid to it and more studies carried out on a national level.

This study is focused on the current wave of migration of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean to Chile and, specifically, their phenotypes and experiences of integration and incorporation into national life. Historically, Chile has had few inhabitants of African origin compared to other South American countries. Therefore, being black in Chile was, until very recently, synonymous with being a foreigner, since it was not common to find Chileans with an African phenotype in the country. In addition, the majority of Chileans identify with Western European culture and have historically shown disdain for people from other Latin American countries, due to the indigenous and African aspect of their appearance and the relative poverty of their countries of origin.

Last but not least, Chile has always been a highly divided society with important social barriers between the rich, the middle class and the poor. This becomes even more

important when studying how local society has reacted to the large influx of Afro-American immigrants over recent years.

This study analyses the situation of immigrants of African descent in the Arica and Parinacota, Tarapacá and Antofagasta regions that make up Chile's *Norte Grande*. Given the fact that this part of the country shares borders with Peru and Bolivia, the local population has, in the past, been relatively more tolerant to immigrants than the rest of the country. In addition, this region in northern Chile has the greatest number of foreigners in relative terms. According to the 2017 census, 11.3% of the population of Arica and Parinacota was foreign, going up to 17.7% in Tarapacá and 17.3% in Antofagasta. The area with the next highest percentage of foreigners was the Metropolitan Region (Great Santiago) with 9.9%.

In this study, the Afro-Latin American migration phenomenon in Arica, Iquique and Antofagasta is looked in to. The first aim is to observe how these immigrants are received in said cities and, in particular, what the locals and immigrants of African descent think about their possibilities of being included in Chilean society and their impact on local identity. The aim is to contribute to the debate on migration processes in northern Chile. On one hand, how immigrants (re)construct their identity is also explored, as well as how local society in these cities adapts to either include and/or exclude this otherness. That is why attention is paid to both the expectations of how immigrants will be received as well as to these cities' socio-political histories and how they were created and set up.

Until the 1990s, the history of migration in Chile was more about Chilean citizens leaving the country than foreigners coming to Chile. For this reason, this study focuses on the period between 2000 and 2015, during which time both legal and illegal immigration increased. This led to people commonly believing that there were many more immigrants than there actually were and certainly many more than national censuses recorded.

The arrival of people of African descent coincides with a request for recognition from Afro-Chilean groups, particularly in Arica. These ethnic minorities always existed in this region and became part of Chile when their territory was incorporated into this country after the War of the Pacific (1879-1883). When looking at the Afro-Latin American migratory phenomenon in Chile, it can be said that, the first people in the immigration

chain generally live in Arica, Iquique or Antofagasta. All of them - or at least a large majority - entered through or lived at some point in the country's north.

Migrants worldwide normally have shared problems related to the adaptation and behaviour that acclimatisation to a new country demand. Other problems are related to personal safety, cultural identity and competition for resources. These also exist in Chile's northern cities. In the regions of Arica and Parinacota and in Tarapacá, they are less frequent and not as widespread as those reported in Antofagasta. The historical and social factors that explain these differences are dealt with in detail in this study.

As this study shows, many of the immigrants of African descent arriving in northern Chile go through a process of redefining their identity, with ethnicity emerging as a possible way of dealing with discrimination and racism. This strategy can be used both to obtain social or political advantages and as a way of defending themselves in what is a hostile environment.

This study explores the following research questions about the migratory phenomenon of Afro-Latin American people to Chile and, in particular, to the Norte Grande. Firstly, what are the personal experience these immigrants have when they arrive in Chile and what happens to their personal and national identities? Secondly, what strategies do they use to deal with these situations? Finally, how do the different aspects related to this phenomenon affect the cities they arrive in?

Regarding the - qualitative - methodological strategy used in this study, a phenomenological approach aims to describe and interpret the experience of immigrants. The study aims to understand the factors that influence how they experience the migratory phenomenon, given the fact that reality is constructed by individuals who are constantly interacting with society. As part of this study, a total of 136 interviews were carried out among 75 men and 61 women from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. Information from national, regional and foreign newspapers were used (from the immigrants' countries of origin), as an indirect source to discover recollections and historical context for the study. These sources were mainly useful because of how they deal with topics related to migration and because they record significant events that have happened during the participants' lifetimes. To protect the interviewees' identities, the study uses pseudonyms to refer to the participants. These people signed consent forms

before taking part, in order to protect the ethical aspects of this kind of research, which needs to use personal testimonies.

To provide the context in which the research was carried out and account for its findings, the study has been organised into five chapters. Each one aims to depict different aspects of the Afro-Latin American migratory phenomenon in northern Chile, as well as the specific features of the cities that make up this country's region.

Chapter 1 tackles the theoretical and conceptual elements of the migratory phenomenon in general. In addition, it analyses some of the elements needed to understand and describe the special features both of Chile's Norte Grande and of Afro-Latin American immigration. Among other things, attention is paid to the process of 'training/de-structuring/reconstructing' the immigrant's identity, where this is a dynamic social construction that is constantly changing. In addition, the cultural climatization phenomenon is introduced, as well as the effect that this has on the psycho-social wellbeing of the migrant and on the city that receives them. Finally, the different strategies immigrants use to deal with the stress produced by cultural acclimatisation, identity de-structuring and the process of insertion into the receiving city are described.

In the first section, the theoretical elements that allow for the process of immigrant identity (re)configuration to be explained are dealt with, beginning by conceptualising identity as a social and dynamic construct. The strategies immigrants use to maintain a degree of cohesion and stability in their personal identity are described and the possible results of the cultural acclimatisation process are observed. In the second section, inclusion and exclusion are presented as the basis for immigrants' identity re-configuration. These discriminatory dynamics affect the frameworks on which immigrants reconstruct their identity. It can be seen that inclusion and exclusion are phenomena that affect both those who arrive in a country as well as other marginalised social groups. In the third section, there is an account of migratory processes and the way in which they affect immigrants' identity. In addition, the migratory phenomenon is highlighted as a threat to national identity, due to the emergence of new identities. Finally, in this chapter's fourth and final section, collective memory is tackled as an element that explains the difference that emerges when the identity problem in migratory processes is analysed.

Chapter 2 deals with the history of Chile and, in particular, centres its attention both on the participation of those of African descent in the founding of the nation and on the way in which they then disappeared both from history and from the population. In the same way, the idea that Chile has been a country without blacks is analysed, as well as the climatic barriers that supposedly prevent them from adapting. Towards the end of the chapter, the specific situation in the Norte Grande is described, as well as the locals' current response to the immigrants in question. This chapter is divided into three sections, the first of which focuses on Chilean historians' debate about the reasons for the absence of blacks in the founding of what they call the 'Chilean race'. The second section goes over the denial of the existence, permanence and participation of those of African descent in national identity. Finally, the third section describes the current scenario of immigrants in the Norte Grande - and the black population in particular - with the cities of Antofagasta, Iquique and Arica as the backdrop for encounters between blacks and the Chilean society that receives them.

Chapter 3 characterises the phenomenon of Afro-Latin American migration in Chile from the perspective of these same immigrants. It is seen that there is a greater salience bias of Afro-Colombians in northern cities. In the first section, the focus is on Afro-Latin American immigrants, particularly Afro-Colombians. The second section focuses on the border experiences of the immigrants who form part of this study. The third section deals with the treatment that immigrants receive and the strategies they use to adapt on a psycho-social level. The fourth section goes deeper into a discussion on what it is to be Chilean and the deviations or changes this state has undergone. Also analysed in this chapter is the conflict in cities where there is discrimination. The chapter ends by emphasising the debate that exists at a social, political and academic level and the effects that this migration phenomenon has on national identity.

Chapter 4 analyses the migration, identity and adaptation strategies used by immigrants in the cities of northern Chile. The first section explores chain reaction migration, which refers to the most common migratory strategy amongst those interviewed. This chapter's second section shows how immigrant workers - specifically Afro-Latin Americans - join the workforce in northern Chile. The third section provides an analytical look at psycho-social adaptation strategies. These strategies include different ways of thinking, principles and values, religious beliefs, family and social relations, politics and government and

economies and technologies. In the fourth part of this chapter, immigrants' adaptation processes and the strategies they use are described: how they manage to balance their life in Chile with their past in their native country, bearing in mind the dual need to maintain and modify aspects such as their way of thinking, values, religious beliefs, family relationships, politics and economy.

Chapter 5 describes how the three cities analysed - and their respective groups of Afro-Latin American immigrants - negotiate barriers and sociocultural norms and their individual identities in order to coexist. To understand how locals and immigrants mutually affect each other, this study takes the historical transformation, collective memory and settling of Arica, Iquique and Antofagasta into account. In this way, it aims to go over both the different experiences and strategies immigrants use to adapt to the cities they end up in, as well as to understand the way in which life in these cities began, how they emerged and how blackness appears or disappears over time.

Finally, the conclusions of the study are presented, organised according to the aims set out in each chapter in order to answer the research's general aim. Firstly, the official denial - as well as the presence and contributions of those of African descent - of the existence of immigrants in the creation and founding of the Chilean nation and its people is depicted. Next, the migratory phenomenon of Afro-Latin Americans in Chile's Norte Grande is described. This includes a look at their migration strategies, their ways and forms of entering the country, their experiences when crossing the border and how these affect migration trajectories. General conclusions are also drawn regarding the identity strategies adopted by immigrants in order to work in, join and adapt to Chilean culture, both in Chile in general and in the country's north in particular.

In the migration processes analysed in this study, it can be seen that the immigrant's identity is initially de-structured. Later, immigrants undergo a process in which their identity is reconstructed. This is the result both of their own characteristics being newly valued and reorganised and of the external valuation these are awarded in their new environment. Giving new value to identity markers and group belongings in the case of Afro-Latin Americans is part of the ongoing negotiation between the significance of skin colour in their native country and in Chile. The prejudice associated with blackness usually has negative connotations, based on the sexualisation of black bodies and, at the same time, the fear that blacks generate and their potential for aggression and the violence

associated with this. As part of their arrival process, immigrants note that in the country, the connotations identity markers of African descent have is, more often than not, negative and depends on the extent to which people value the opinions of others over their own experiences.

Racism and classism are the main factors that serve to de-structure the identity of the Afro-Latin American immigrant arriving in northern Chile. From the very moment they cross the border, they face prejudice linked to both their skin colour and the socio-economic characteristics associated with their countries of origin. This study also reveals that, according to the city in which the phenomenon is observed, the results are different. The further south the city, the greater Chilean rejection of the Afro-Latin American immigrant's otherness. In Arica, the presence of these immigrants is accepted more than in Antofagasta, whereas attitudes in Iquique are somewhere between the two.

Immigrants create a new identity which merges what is Afro, Chilean and what remains from their native countries. This leads to the emergence of a hybrid identity, in which they reorganise the identity markers they brought with them and incorporate new ones. That is why they do not end up as either Chileans or Colombians, for example, but rather speak like one and look like the other. Even some time after their arrival, many feel stuck between two different worlds, creating identities that incorporate conflicting aspects of them both. This can be seen when analysing the migration strategy used by Afro-Latin Americans in the migration chains destined for Chile that emerge in their native countries and in which a large number of people are involved. Integration is made easier by modifying the identity of participants, incorporating social capital and new identity markers with their respective values.

This study concludes that some immigrants use ethnic identity as an integration strategy. As part of this, their ethnic characteristics - such as the colour of their skin or physical appearance - gain an importance that did not previously exist in the restructuring of their identity. In addition, said immigrants adopt customs or practices that the majority never participated in in their native country, such as dances and songs with Afro roots. In contrast, it can be seen that other immigrants reject all the customs and cultural practices related to their ethnicity or native country and adopt the customs and practices of their destination. They do not want their children to be excluded from the society in which they

live and prefer them to identify with Chile. They learn to dance cueca, dress up as Chilean cowboys and girls and quickly adopt the Chilean way of speaking.

The arrival of Afro-Latin American immigrants is having an important effect on the collective identity of the inhabitants of Arica, Iquique and Antofagasta. To understand the way in which the very formation of immigrant identity has had an effect on collective identity, history must be considered. In Arica, blackness has almost always been accepted since colonial times. This is explained by the region's historical coexistence with different identities. The process of Chilenization in Tarapacá later on mainly affected Iquique, since the area has no valleys as such to receive and give refuge to blacks like in Arica. Lastly, Antofagasta reflects the beginning of a collective Chilean identity in which the idea of a pseudo-Chilean predominates. This is expressed by rejection of the other in general - and of blacks, Bolivians and Peruvians in particular - as well as the hybridisation of local identity in Antofagasta that affects both migrants and the local Chilean population.