

Review Essay/Ensayo de Reseña

Searching for Work, Striving for Justice: New Perspectives on Latin American Migrations to the United States

Robert V. Kemper

- *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600-1933*, by Rodolfo F. Acuña. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2007.
- *Impacts of Border Enforcement on Mexican Migration: The View from Sending Communities*, edited by Wayne A. Cornelius and Jessa M. Lewis. La Jolla, SD: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, 2007.¹
- *Four Generations of Norteños: New Research from the Cradle of Mexican Migration*, edited by Wayne A. Cornelius, David Fitzgerald, and Scott Borger. La Jolla, SD: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, 2008.
- *Mayan Journeys: The New Migration from Yucatán to the United States*, edited by Wayne A. Cornelius, David Fitzgerald, and Pedro Lewin Fischer. La Jolla, SD: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, 2007.
- *In Search of Providence: Transnational Mayan Identities*, by Patricia Foxen. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007.

From the earliest social science works concerned with the northward migration of Mexican citizens and other Latin Americans to the United States (Gamio 1930, 1931; McWilliams 1942; Taylor 1928, 1933), questions have been posed about who migrates, where do they come from and where do they go, what are their characteristics compared to those who stay behind, what successes do they enjoy and what failures do they endure (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno 2001). Over the decades, the number of persons involved in this population flow has grown dramatically, so that now virtually every community in Mexico – and many in Central America – can count its fathers and wives, its sons and daughters among the Hispanic-origin population spreading throughout the United States. It is no surprise that as new ideas, theories, and paradigms emerged they have been put to the empirical test in the domain of migration. In the 1930s and 1940s, an ‘acculturation’ framework was popularized and widely contested; in the 1950s and 1960s, many scholars used a ‘modernization’ model, then in the 1970s and 1980s others employed ‘dependency theories’ and ‘historical-structural’ approaches (Kemper 1979, 1995). By the 1990s, and continuing to the present, many scholars have focused on specific issues, such as gender, health, ethnicity, and even religion, often within a ‘transnational’ project in which individual agency is set against governmental and corporate power.

Whatever approach is adopted, whatever level of analysis is pursued, we still

struggle to comprehend the impact of migration upon individuals, their families, and their households, as well as its effects on the political economies of sending and receiving regions. Social scientists also have striven to appreciate the complicated relationships among individual decisions about migration, local and regional conditions, and national and international governmental policies. Recently, a number of scholars and social critics have recast the phenomenon of migration from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America as a human rights and social justice matter.

With a social science literature already numbering in the tens of thousands of articles, book chapters, monographs, theses, and dissertations, what more can be written about the northward migration to the United States? Is there anything to inspire new research and new policy directions? If the five volumes under review here are any measure of current research, then the answer is a resounding 'yes'. Each volume offers a distinctive perspective and adds an important voice to the current debate about the impacts of this massive population transfer from south to north and the reciprocal flow of remittances from north to south.

Migration history

First, consider *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600-1933*. This splendid history of labour migration is the *magnum opus* of Professor Rodolfo F. Acuña, founder of the Chicano Studies Department at California State University, Northridge, and author of many works on Mexican-Americans in the United States, including six editions of *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, first published in 1972. A research project that began in 1973 with a focus on the 1933 San Joaquin Valley Cotton Strike eventually turned into a 2,000 page manuscript. In the hands of the skilful editors at the University of Arizona Press, this massive product of Acuña's personal odyssey has been transformed into a handsome book, with a text of 285 pages accompanied by 38 maps and historical photographs, nearly 80 pages of notes, and more than 40 pages of sources cited.

How did a project focused on a 1933 labour strike become a history of Mexican migration from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the first third of the twentieth century? The author began his odyssey with just one randomly selected individual in mind: Pedro Subia, who was murdered on a picket line near Arvin, California, on 10 October 1933. Not content to write a historical biography, Acuña instead sought to know more about the experiences of Subia and his cohort of immigrants from Mexico. Using the metaphor of a 'corridor', Acuña asked 'What corridors had they forged on their way to the San Joaquin Valley?' (p. x). Eventually, Acuña's research revealed four important corridors – the Camino Real Corridor, stretching from Mexico City through Durango to Chihuahua to El Paso and New Mexico; the Sonoran Corridor, heading northward from Hermosillo to southern Arizona; the Mesilla Corridor, running across southern New Mexico and Arizona; and the Cotton Corridor, connecting southern Arizona to Los Angeles and onward to the region of central California. These four corridors provide the major metaphor that connects the lives of individual migrants to the broader issues and structures of their times. In short, this volume tells the story of Pedro Subia and others like him who travelled from Mexico to the United States southwest and eventually settled in the agricultural heartland of the California Central Valley –

and, we may add, whose children and grandchildren have moved on to live and work in cities in California, Oregon, Washington, and other western states.

Rather than focusing on the twentieth century, Acuña takes us back to the arrival of the Europeans in the vast region that the Spaniards came to call *Nueva España*. Chapter 1 tells of the bitter fruits of conquest, stressing the resistance of the native peoples to the imposition of Spanish rule, especially in the north-central region that became *Zacatecas* and *Chihuahua*. Despite a series of violent revolts, the Spaniards consolidated their colonial institutions and gained control over the land, the water, and the people. In Chapter 2, Acuña describes the continuing transformations of *Chihuahua* during the first century of Mexican independence from Spain. The conflicts between conservatives and liberals for power at the highest levels of government did little to bring freedom or prosperity to ordinary people in *Chihuahua*. As the author points out, 'Four major developments accelerated the state's economic and political transformation: the defeat of the Apaches, the monopolization of land and water, the arrival of the Mexican Central Railroad, and the massive influx of foreign capital' (p. 36). These developments enriched the few and impoverished many among the middle class and the peasants, setting the stage for the violent reaction to the worst features of the long rule of Porfirio Díaz.

The difficult conditions in *Chihuahua* led many workers to migrate northward into what had become the southern stretches of New Mexico and Arizona, an area that was becoming very profitable for powerful companies invested in gold, silver, and copper mining. Acuña relates the increasing difficulties of Mexican workers and their families in the mining camps and company towns in southern Arizona and northern Mexico. Wage cuts, increased hours, and problems with Euro-Americans who were given the better paying jobs resulted in numerous labour confrontations, including the Clifton-Morenci Strike of 1902 and the Cananea Strike of 1906.

The migration of Mexican workers and their families continued along the Cotton corridor toward California. The decline in the mining industry, and the violence associated with the union struggles there, brought tens of thousands of Mexicans to Los Angeles and thence to the Central Valley agricultural region. The arrival of the Depression in 1929 brought increasingly hostile attitudes to Mexicans, not only in the workplace but in schools and other public accommodations. In the early 1930s, repatriation programmes encouraged thousands of Mexicans to return to their homeland, but ultimately a lack of support from an impoverished Mexican government meant failure for such efforts. These events set the stage for the San Joaquin Valley Cotton Strike of 1933 and its aftermath. Noting that, 'Although Los Angeles was not in the San Joaquin Valley, it controlled it' (p. 242), Acuña points out that forces far beyond those of the Mexican labour migrants were at work to ensure that their New Deal-supported unionizing efforts would not succeed. Matters reached a frenzied pitch in the fall of 1933, when the cotton crop was ready for harvest. On 10 October, Pedro Subia, age 57, was killed during a confrontation between striking labourers and growers. His was not the only death in that moment, but it became a symbol for the manner in which the powerful growers (and the banks who owned their contracts) dealt with Mexican migrant labourers in California. Soon thereafter, a Commission was created to assess the situation. In its report, the Commission concluded that 'the civil rights of the strikers have been violated' (p. 261-262).

In the volume's final chapter, the author concludes that 'What this monograph clearly shows is that significant social change does not come about without opposition to the established order' (p. 280). In this light, we might add that migration *per se* is a challenge to the 'established order', especially when it occurs on the scale that has existed between Mexico and the United States for the past 100 years. In this superb and well-documented monograph, Acuña accomplishes his goal: to show how a particular event – the murder of Pedro Subia in 1933 – was not an isolated incident determined only by the decisions of individuals present at the scene, but also was the outcome of more than two hundred years of structural changes in Mexican and U.S. societies.

Sending communities

Following on Acuña's work, we have not one but three volumes co-edited by Prof. Wayne Cornelius, Director of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies (CCIS) at the University of California, San Diego, and founder of the unique Mexican Migration and Field Research Program (MMFRP), in which undergraduate and graduate students conduct fieldwork in Mexican communities of high emigration and in U.S. receiving communities.²

The Introduction considers the major issues behind the question, 'Does border enforcement deter unauthorized immigration?' Cornelius convincingly shows that past and current U.S. border policies not only have failed to accomplish their stated deterrence goals but have had the unintended consequences of separating families across the border and causing untold thousands of persons to remain north of the border rather than returning to their homes south of the border. In brief, 'Our findings suggest that current U.S. immigration control policy is fundamentally flawed' (p. 12). In addition to this summary of the selected findings of the field project, Cornelius describes the research design and methodology employed in the two agricultural communities – Tlacuitapa, Jalisco and Las Ánimas, Zacatecas. Chapter 2 offers basic profiles of these two sending communities as of the 2005 fieldwork period, noting important similarities and differences. Next, Chapter 3 takes up the problem of the contemporary migration process by examining the demographic and occupational profiles of 'experienced' migrants and non-migrants. After discussing why some community members stay in town, the authors take up the case of the migrants, emphasizing the importance of family and social networks. Through a logistic regression analysis, the authors suggest that a significant predictor of an 'intent to migrate' is an individual's sense of relative deprivation, which leads them to conclude that migration from the two communities 'is driven principally by economic considerations' (p. 51). Chapter 4 examines the impacts of U.S. immigration policies on migration behaviour. The authors effectively combine the personal stories (and tragedies) of previous migrants with a statistical analysis of survey responses. Two findings are striking: first, 'we could find no evidence that Border patrol efforts actually deter undocumented migration', and 'interviewees who knew someone who died while crossing the border are significantly *more* likely to risk a crossing themselves, indicating that even awareness of the risk does not deter entry' (p. 59).

The following chapters analyse several other important elements. The problem

of 'emptying-out' the sending communities and the settlement of the migrants in the United States are discussed in chapter 5. After considering the failure of employer sanctions to mitigate migration flows, the authors examine the successful use of family and social networks in the settlement process. The authors of Chapter 6 on gender differences note that female out-migration is increasing in both communities, although women often migrate not from economic necessity but in order to reunite with husbands and other family members. Chapter 7 examines the generational dimensions of the migration tradition. The four generations of emigrants are grouped into four categories: bracero programme-era (prior to 1964); post-bracero programme era (1965-1985); Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) era (1986-1992); and new border enforcement era (1993-present). With respect to their border crossing experiences, the post-1993 migrants reported less difficulty than earlier migrants. The linkages between migration and the actual and perceived levels of economic development in the sending communities are considered in Chapter 8. The opening of a shoe factory in the region has brought jobs to some, but hardly will stem the tide northward. Nor have the impacts of NAFTA been as positive as promised. The major linkage between migration and development is the substantial flow of remittances from the north, most of which feeds and maintains family members in the sending communities. Finally, Chapter 9 brings the text to a close by looking at political involvement among migrants, first in terms of their voting behaviour in Mexican elections and second in terms of their desires to become U.S. citizens. The results of the survey show that a majority of the migrants 'expressed a desire to become U.S. citizens' (p. 160).

The follow-up volume on Tlacuitapa, Jalisco, provides additional data and more theoretical insights into the experience of this sending community in west central Mexico. *Four Generations of Norteños: New Research from the Cradle of Mexican Migration* is a major contribution to the literature precisely because it provides a long-term perspective on migration from a community whose history and current circumstances are well-documented. Using the standard bi-national research model as in the other CCIS-MMFRP studies, this 2007 project generated nearly 1,000 survey and life history interviews with returned migrants and non-migrants in Tlacuitapa, as well as their U.S.-based relatives in Oklahoma City, the San Francisco Bay area, and other U.S. receiving communities.

After the editors present an introduction to the evolution of Tlacuitapa as a town of 'norteños', the student authors offer models of migrant decision-making in light of a three-level framework: macro- (state), meso- (community), and micro-level (individual) forces. In general terms, the state level involved the development of the bracero programme during World War II, the creation of NAFTA in 1994, and the several economic crises endured by Mexico and by the United States since the Depression of the 1930s. The community level involves the social networks that have come into existence since the 1940s, the cumulative effects of migration upon the community, and the development of a culture of emigration toward the north. The individual level reflects the characteristics (education, income) of particular persons as well as their perceptions of expected wage differentials between work available at home and to be obtained in the United States. After examining the decision-making processes and characteristics of Tlacuitapa emigrants, the authors conclude that settlement in the United States is rarely the original intent but is

an unintended consequence of longer stays, often encouraged by increased border enforcement or year-round U.S. employment.

Chapter 3 focuses on the post-1993 militarization of the U.S. border with Mexico and the ways in which the people of Tlacuitapa have responded. The unintended consequence of heightened border enforcement is that emigrants stay longer in the north and minimize the number of return trips to Mexico, even if this means missing the birth of one's child, a mother's funeral, or a sister's marriage. Current U.S. policies also encourage men to bring their wives and children to the north, which also increases the length of their stays. Nearly half of those surveyed held well-founded concerns about the dangers of crossing through the desert or mountains, especially in Arizona – which now has the highest proportion of illegal crossings along the border. In recent years, dehydration, heat stroke, and hypothermia have become daily companions of the unauthorized migrants in their treks across the border wilderness. Trailing far behind (at 15 per cent) was a concern with Mexican bandits, notorious for ambushing their compatriots, beating, robbing, and raping them at gunpoint. The grim result of U.S. border enforcement policies has been to force many potential migrants into dangerous crossing zones – since the mid-1990s more than 4,000 persons from Mexico and other Latin American countries have lost their lives along the border. Among the toll of dead are several members of the Tlacuitapa community.

The *coyote* industry is studied in Chapter 4. The ethnography describes the structure of the business – from the highest levels of *patrones* (bosses), to the *coyotes* themselves to their assistants. Below the level of assistants are the *chequeadores* and *chequeadores pa'rriba* who signal when it is safe to cross the border and pass through checkpoints beyond the border. At the bottom of the hierarchy are *cuidanderos* (caretakers), usually young teenagers who distract Border Patrol agents, remove tire spikes along preferred routes, and provide information on local conditions. Nearly all migrants from Tlacuitapa, often through the assistance of family and friends with prior experiences, arrange to hire *coyotes* before reaching the border. Payment – ranging from a few hundred to several thousand dollars, depending on the type of migrant and the distance involved – is usually made by family members who receive the new arrivals. In effect, another unintended consequence of current U.S. border policies has been to stimulate a larger and more efficient coyote industry.

The following chapters focus on visas, remittances, cultural cleavages and gender. Whereas most earlier migrants were able to obtain their '*papeles*' to permit their legal stays in the United States, burdens of paperwork, high fees, and long delays have forced more recent migrants to enter without legal authorization. The important role of remittances in local development is linked to the fact that many small-scale producers have suffered from Mexico's entry into the GATT in 1986 and into NAFTA in 1994. As a result, migrant remittances have become not only a form of insurance but a vital component of the local economy. The authors estimate that the annual remittances to Tlacuitapa are more than \$1.5 million dollars yearly, which yields a per capita flow of over \$2,700 dollars. Most remittances are spent on household maintenance, health care, and other basic expenses rather than on capital investments (such as starting a business). Regarding cultural cleavages emerging among migrants and non-migrants, the authors report that migrants often

are labelled ‘*norteños*’ (northerners) when they return home to Jalisco. This ‘*norteño*’ label defines migrants as outsiders in their own community. Younger migrants find themselves caught between two worlds, urban America and rural Mexico, with their sense of identity challenged in both places. The impact of migration on gender relations ranges from dating to marriage to family arrangements. While men often migrate prior to being married, women are more likely to migrate after marriage. Many residents endure bi-national family situations, with the husband in the north while the wife and children remain at home. Such separations take a toll on families and local social organization. Migration also influences the household economy. In the United States, more women work outside of the home than is the case in Tlacuitapa. This often leads men to take on more household chores and child care duties in the United States than they would have done back home.

Bringing the volume to a close, Chapter 9 examines the so-called ‘migrant health paradox’ (see also *Mayan Journeys* reviewed below) as manifested among the Tlacuitapeños. The authors offer three findings: (1) the migrants in the sample are healthier than their non-migrant counterparts; (2) migrants with more exposure to the United States are not likely to report an increased number of infirmities, suggesting that longer stays in the United States do not necessarily lead to a decline in health; and (3) the obstacles to migration constitute a filtering effect, and only healthier Tlacuitapeños decide to make the journey north. Going beyond primary health conditions, the authors also examine job-related injuries among migrants in the United States. Because many male migrants work in construction and other hazardous trades, accidents are common and deaths are not unknown. Negotiating the U.S. health care system is a challenge for migrants, especially those without insurance or with insufficient coverage.

Taken together, these two volumes do a splendid job of describing and analysing migration decision-making and behaviour in two significant sending communities and their respective receiving areas in the United States. The 18 chapters and more than 450 pages of text, principally authored by more than fifty undergraduate and graduate students, have been admirably assembled and edited by Cornelius and his colleagues, Jessa M. Lewis, David Fitzgerald, and Scott Borger. The result of their collective work is clear and unburdened by excessive jargon. We can only hope that policy-makers in Mexico and the United States will heed the recommendations offered here so that a more just approach to the needs of people, communities, and nations can be implemented in the near future.

Mayan migration

The third volume co-edited by Cornelius et al., *Mayan Journeys: The New Migration from Yucatán to the United States*, intentionally focuses attention on a community (Tunkás, Yucatán) with a recent pattern of emigration to the United States. Following the model of the MMFRP, more than 30 students from UCSD and the Mexican partner institution (Centro INAH Yucatán) participated in the field research and writing of this monograph. Chapter 1 considers Yucatán as an emerging migrant-sending region. After discussing the four major regions (Traditional, North, Central, and South-southeast) from which Mexican migrants travel north-

ward to the United States, the author (and co-editor) Pedro Lewis Fischer tackles the problem of the Yucatán peninsula as a regional migration system. Unlike the earlier CCIS-MMFRP volume on Jalisco and Zacatecas, here attention is paid to internal population movements, especially to the growing touristic centres in the so-called 'Mundo Maya' in and around Cancún, in Quintana Roo. The remittances from these regional migrants have sustained rural Mayan communities for several decades and continue to be important revenue sources. Unfortunately, economic crises and tropical storms have combined to force residents to contemplate other options, including emigration to the United States. Next, Chapter 2 provides the reader with an introduction to the community of Tunkás, which means 'ugly rocks' in Mayan, a town of just under 3,000 inhabitants. The pioneering generation is being replaced by younger emigrants, most of whom follow their social networks to communities in southern California, especially in Anaheim, Santa Ana, and Inglewood.

The contemporary migration process is the subject of Chapter 3. The authors consider migrants' demographic profile and their motives for heading north to the United States. Their model of the migration process emphasizes the role of the U.S. labour market and the importance of social networks. They also observe that women who travel to the United States experience some liberation from the constraints imposed on them in a traditional rural Mayan community. Thus, relative to men who tend to lose prestige and power in the north, women gain a measure of freedom and control. In Chapter 4, the authors consider the linkages between internal and international migration. This chapter shows that the experience of working and living in urban places like Cancún and Mérida can provide a foundation and a stimulus for successful international migration. The case of the Tunkaseños confirms the view that 'internal migration promotes future international migration' (p. 86).

Chapter 5 deals with the impacts of U.S. immigration policies on the migration behaviour of the people of Tunkás. The use of *coyotes* is on the rise as are the prices they charge for safe passage across the border. The research in Tunkás shows that 'migrants are undeterred by their awareness of physical danger and heightened risk of detection. [The] data also confirm that the increasing costs of circumventing these obstacles are contributing to longer stays by migrants once they reach the United States' (p. 112). Border crossing often leads to settling out of the migrant stream. In Chapter 6, the authors take on this perennial issue among scholars and policy-makers. They found that those emigrants who settle in the United States are much more likely (83 per cent to 53 per cent) to have some form of documented status. The increasing number of female migrants, many of whom can go north as a result of family unification policies, has contributed to this difference.

While an increasing number of Tunkaseños are participating in internal and international migration flows, some 'two-thirds of the adult population of Tunkás have never migrated internationally, and approximately 80 per cent of the non-migrant population reported that they have never considered living outside of Tunkás permanently' (pp. 145-146, Chapter 7). The most important reason for remaining in the community is a sense of family obligations. Moreover, stay-at-homes often have a negative impression of the outside world based on the often culturally inappropriate behaviour of return migrants to the community. Chapter 8

focuses on migration and local development, including the declining agricultural employment opportunities, the limited access to credit due to the absence of a local financial institution, and the increasing role of remittances. The authors offer an interesting case study of apiculture (bee-keeping) to show that this sector has a high potential to provide steady employment and income for those who remain in Tunkás. Ethnicity's relationship to migration is the subject of chapter 9. The authors examine the way in which Mayan ethnic identity determines migration behaviour, a topic that also is the focus of Foxen's study of K'iche' Mayan communities in Guatemala (see below). The survey in Tunkás and among the migrants in southern California reveals that the U.S. migrants, internal migrants, and non-migrants have similar ethnic self-identifications. The largest proportion in each group self-identify as Yucatecan and then secondarily as Mexican. Only 12 per cent to 15 per cent of each group self-identifies primarily as Mayan, and in the case of internal migrants and non-migrants they are more likely to self-identify according to their religious affiliations than as Mayan (Table 9.1, p. 172).

In Chapter 10, the theme of migration and religion is addressed. Noting that recent years have seen an increase in migration to the United States and an increase in non-Catholic religious groups, the authors ponder this correlation for the case of Tunkás. Although there are 77 per cent Catholics and 23 per cent non-Catholics in Tunkás, their demographic, economic, and migratory characteristics are similar. About a third of both groups have migrated to the United States at least once, and about 4 in 5 in both groups already had a family member in the United States before they migrated. Remittances are similar among both groups, with regard to frequency and amounts sent home. Finally, about 25 per cent of each group plans to migrate to the United States in the current year (Table 10.1, p. 197). In sum, the authors conclude that 'religious differences in Tunkás do not significantly influence migratory behaviour' (p. 206).

Chapter 11 deals with migration and health, in particular the so-called 'Latino health paradox' that the longer Mexican migrants remain in the United States the less healthy they become. The survey of Tunkás residents and emigrants provides interesting data about this paradox. According to the authors, 'across the entire range of self-reported diseases we surveyed, Tunkaseño migrants are sicker than their non-migrating counterparts. Rates of diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol are significantly higher for Tunkaseños with migration experience' (p. 213). Migrants from Tunkás are more likely than non-migrants to visit traditional medical practitioners, even though they are better educated, are more exposed to modern health-care practices, and are of higher economic status than those who do not migrate (p. 216). On the other hand, migrants are more likely to suffer from alcoholism and depression than are stay-at-homes. The volume concludes with a discussion of migration and political participation. The authors focus on what they call 'political binationals', the segment of migrants who have attachments to both U.S. and Yucatecan political systems. The survey shows that more than half of the migrants are interested in becoming U.S. citizens while only about one-quarter are not interested in naturalizing their status. About one in six have already become citizens. Nearly 92 per cent of Tunkaseño migrants who could speak English expressed interest in acquiring U.S. citizenship (p. 245).

In summary, *Mayan Journeys* is a thorough, well-written case study of the

sending and receiving sides of a 'new' migrant community. It is especially valuable for its emphasis on the linkages between international and internal migration. Perhaps a future research team can follow up with additional studies, in the way that the recent MMFRP studies of Tlacuitapa, Jalisco, and Las Ánimas, Zacatecas, were built on earlier fieldwork. If so, then Tunkás may join nearby Dzitas (cf. Redfield 1941) as one of the iconic communities in the ethnographic literature of Yucatán and Mexico.

The last volume to be reviewed here, *In Search of Providence: Transnational Mayan Identities*, is the only one not based in Mexico. But this is an accident of colonial and national histories, and the border between Mexico and Guatemala is no more than a virtual dotted line in the forest. As one of the major Mayan Indian populations in Mesoamerica, the K'iche' Mayan Indians, the focus of Patricia Foxen's ethnography, can properly be considered together with *Mayan Journeys* and other works concerned with migration to the United States. Foxen, a research associate in the Women's Health Programme at the Toronto General Hospital, with a cross-appointment at the University of Toronto Anthropology Department, first became involved with Central American refugees as a volunteer for an NGO during the 1980s. Eventually, through a casual conversation with an immigration lawyer in Boston, she learned about an enclave of 15,000-20,000 Guatemala immigrants in Providence, Rhode Island (or, as they called it, *Providencia*). She did some sixteen months of fieldwork in El Quiché, Guatemala, and in Rhode Island between 1996 and 1998, with the first half spent in Xinxuc (a pseudonym) and the second half in Providence. Her ethnographic travels back and forth from the Guatemalan highlands to a traditional New England city provide an experience through which Foxen could appreciate that the Mayans found themselves *con un pie aquí y otro allá* ('with one foot here and one foot there').

Chapter 1 tells the story of how the author settled into Xinxuc. Given her prior experiences with an NGO it is not surprising that she found a European NGO (to which she gives the pseudonym PLANTAS) that offered her a place to stay in their headquarters in the town. When she hired the young wife of one of the PLANTAS promoters to work as a translator, Foxen found herself thrust into the midst of the complex social field of families with connections to Providence. Arriving in Providence in spring 1997, Foxen was fortunate to find an apartment in the middle of one of the two inner-city neighbourhoods inhabited by Guatemalan and other immigrant groups. Foxen was able to do interviews in different settings among women and men, and found that her ever-growing photograph collection provided excellent opportunities to learn people's stories. When she returned to Xinxuc, she was greeted warmly by many, but found distrust among others, especially in the light of larger political events in Guatemala at that time.

In Chapter 2, Foxen provides a sweeping overview of Mayan history since early colonial times, with increasingly detailed accounts of late twentieth-century political developments from *la violencia* through the 1996 Peace Accords and beyond. In this historical context, the author distinguishes among coastal labour migration, urban migration, and foreign migration and asks how the transnational movements to and from Providence compare to and differ from traditional modes of population mobility among the K'iche'. A historical and ethnographic description of the K'iche' of Xinxuc is provided in Chapter 3. Foxen notes that absent

family members can be found in diverse settings – from coastal plantations to urban factories to Providence. She observes that, ‘This pursuit of multiple migration strategies and economic alternatives is critical to marginalized people and families for whom any one option is highly susceptible to failure’ (p. 78). Foxen concludes the chapter by noting that, ‘The extreme fear and social disintegration produced by the war in Xinxuc must be taken into account when examining the cultural and psychological impacts of subsequent cross-border movements’ (p. 95)

Foxen lays out the pioneer phase of migration from Xinxuc to *La Costa del Norte* – Providence, U.S.A – of the mid-1980s, during the period of *la violencia*, and describes the dangers of the trip through Mexico and the United States to Providence, with two border crossings along the way. These days, with *coyotes* providing guidance during the trip, a K’iche’ without proper documents might pay from \$3,000 to \$4,000 to go from home to Providence. Migrants often explain their decision to leave Xinxuc and the success or failure on the trip in terms of *suerte* (‘luck’). Deciding to go north actually depends on much more than luck. Some leave out of a sense of desperation (*pura necesidad*), others from a sense of familial duty (*pura obligación*), and still others from a sense of adventure (*aventura*). Once arrived in Providence, most migrants usually settle into one of two enclaves. Unlike many other immigrant populations, they lack formal social and economic organizations (equivalent to the home town associations found among so many Mexican migrants). In spite of this lack of collective spirit – which results in part from the distrust and fear of the time of *la violencia* – many of the migrants from Xinxuc work hard to maintain their ties with their sending community. Remittances are routinely sent back to their families as part of a tremendous flow of funds that has become Guatemala’s major source of foreign exchange – along with coffee. Those who appear to deny their identity and background are criticized by those who maintain strong ties to Xinxuc. Envy and gossip are used to control those who are more successful than others. As Foxen notes, there is a ‘difficult balance between striving to *superar* and maintaining a sense of local indigenous identity’ (p. 152).

What identities do the K’iche’ Maya Indians of Xinxuc claim (or reject) as they settle in Providence or move back and forth between the United States and Guatemala? Foxen approaches this question by examining the relevance of the ‘Mayanist project’ to the migrants in Providence. Some of the K’iche’ migrants are openly abusive of the Mayanist movement back home, while others support it. Whatever their stance on this issue, the migrants understand the multiplicity of ways of being indigenous. Next, Foxen moves from migration to memory when she asks ‘How do the different social spaces of Xinxuc and Providence influence the memory processes that enable people to cope with past horror and go on with life?’ (pp. 202-203). Her answer suggests that the people of Xinxuc are trapped in a transnational system of multiple identities. As the author says in her concluding remarks, ‘In the end, this book has provided a detailed snapshot of a group of indigenous people in a small Guatemalan town who move to an American inner city in which they find themselves marginalized within a complex society that is in fact a compendium of such communities. And yet, within this microcosm, [...] we see the dreams and horrors, the promises and the failures, the voices and the silences, of whole worlds’ (p. 250).

These five volumes offer new perspectives on migration, Middle America, and ethnic identity and provide a powerful witness to the hopes and dreams of marginalized people who are searching for work and striving for justice in a world that has come uninvited into their lives. Acuña, Cornelius et al., and Foxen should be required reading for governmental policy makers who know too little about the reality of migration cultures and systems in communities located far from the halls of power in the United States, Mexico, and Guatemala.

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Robert V. Kemper is Professor in the Department of Anthropology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, 75275 USA. <rkemper@smu.edu>

Notes

1. The volumes published by the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies are distributed by Lynne Rienner Publishers.
2. Beyond the three volumes reviewed here, a fourth volume is in preparation, based on field research conducted in 2007-2008 in the community of San Miguel Tlacotepec, located in the remote Mixteca region of Oaxaca, and in a receiving community in the San Diego metropolitan area. The forthcoming monograph, titled *Migration from the Mexican Mixteca: A Transnational Community in Oaxaca and California*, will be edited by Wayne A. Cornelius, David Fitzgerald, Jorge Hernández Díaz, and Scott Borger.

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