

*Citizenship across Borders: The Political Transnationalism of El Migrante*. By Michael Peter Smith and Matt Bakker. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007. Pp. 249. \$19.95 paper.

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In Smith and Bakker's *Citizenship across Borders*, they challenge reductionist academic and popular views of Mexican migrants that characterize them as singularly loyal to Mexican politics, removed from the concerns of their local Mexican communities, or on the general outskirts of real political involvement in either Mexico or the United States. Essentially theirs is the goal of humanizing their subjects by revealing the multiple layers of their political concerns and actions. It is an attempt to show the "far more complex dialectic of identity politics at play in the hearts and minds of our ethnographic subjects" (p. 167). They use several case studies in Mexico and the United States to accomplish this goal.

Smith and Bakker challenge several prominent academic arguments. The first is the notion that Mexican migrants to the United States are doubly loyal to Mexico, and thus thinly loyal to the United States. A second is that Mexican migrants are torn between their interests in transnational citizenship and the process of assimilation to their host country. They find that rather than being doubly loyal to Mexico, the migrants experience a dual allegiance to both countries that is contextualized within specific experiences, and that these experiences are conditioned by fluctuations in politics and in the laws regulating their ability to participate in political processes on both sides of the border. They also find that there is variability in how transnationalism affects (or does not affect) the incorporation of Mexican migrants into host communities. They argue that transnationalism should be understood as a political, cultural, legal, and social-psychological process; it is not simply an adjective on the word *migrant*.

In the first two substantive chapters (Chapters 3 and 4), Smith and Bakker show how Mexican states have a great deal of variability in their attempts to incorporate migrants to the United States into their economies and politics. The underlying argument in these chapters is that states have a great interest in retaining and channeling the flow of remittances into their communities. In many cases, they have become reliant on these funds for community-improvement programs that seek to implement better basic facilities, such as access to water, as well as more ambitious marketing endeavors that might challenge their place in the global production chain. The authors discuss state funds matching programs, political and community-based organizations in the United States and Mexico, and the existence of newspapers and Web sites

that seek to instill communal identity and commitment to these endeavors. These chapters show in practice just how Mexican migrants' allegiance to Mexico and the United States is conditioned by what they experience, and how those experiences are impacted by the politics, economies, and laws in their sending communities.

The pinnacle account in the text is found in Chapters 5 and 6, where Smith and Bakker chronicle the rise of the "Tomato King," Andrés Bermúdez. Bermúdez is an immigrant to the United States who experienced great agricultural success and ran for political office in his home state of Zacatecas. His candidacy and his initial election to office were overturned based on legal challenges to his residency. This initiated a series of events that led to his eventual re-election and subsequently more legal challenges. On the periphery was the institution of laws allowing migrant nonresidents to vote in general political elections in Mexico. An underlying platform for his candidacy had relied on the idea that he was a transnational hero—his in-between status as both a member of and a member outside of the local community shielded him from the problems of rampant political corruption within more traditional Mexican politics. After two years in office, Bermúdez became disillusioned. He frequently peppered his time in office with threats of returning completely to the United States and urged Mexican immigrants to the United States to stop or slow their remittances. Eventually, after transforming his image from the caricature of the Tomato King, he resigned and sought election elsewhere in Mexico. At the core of these events is a changed understanding of what it means to be part of the political and legal community of Mexico. Smith and Bakker use the biography of the Tomato King as a narrative emblem of this changed understanding.

Overall, this book is best suited for scholars actively engaged in debates about transnationalism and transnational politics, migration, and the accompanying laws of nation-states. One shortcoming of the text is that it is less detailed in its account of how Mexican migrants carve out political space within the United States. Methodologically the text relies more on in-depth interviews than "thick" ethnography, which suits the material of the text but would not serve well as a guide for future ethnographies of a like kind.

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