



The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico

Jeffrey H. Cohen

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Migration is a way of life for many individuals and even families in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Some who leave their rural communities go only as far as the state capital, while others migrate to other parts of Mexico and to the United States. Most send money back to their communities, and many return to their homes after a few years. Migration offers Oaxacans economic opportunities that are not always available locally—but it also creates burdens for those who stay behind.

This book explores the complex constellation of factors that cause rural Oaxacans to migrate, the historical and contemporary patterns of their migration, the effects of migration on families and communities, and the economic, cultural, and social reasons why many Oaxacans choose not to migrate. Jeffrey Cohen draws on fieldwork and survey data from twelve communities in the central valleys of Oaxaca to give an encompassing view of the factors that drive migration and determine its outcomes. He demonstrates conclusively that, while migration is an effective way to make a living, no single model can explain the patterns of migration in southern Mexico.

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