

Coffee Anyone? Recent Research on Latin American Coffee Societies

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The recent explosion of the popularity of coffee houses in the United States coincides with a swelling number of monographs on the history of coffee in Latin America. However, these studies are less motivated by the faddishness of the Starbucks Revolution than by concerns about the fate of peasant producers, particularly in Central America. Unlike most coffee sippers who care only about the brew, scholars who study the history of coffee are more concerned with the local social, cultural, and economic impact of its cultivation; the *arabica* itself is often almost incidental.

In the last decade a spate of excellent historical monographs, often influenced by anthropology, have deconstructed earlier conventional wisdoms, models, and categories through detailed local studies. Many of these works raise several new and important questions and provide insights principally in social and cultural history. More important, several scholars have used coffee as a backdrop to study peasant societies, state building, class formation, as well as national, racial, and gendered identities. Nevertheless, generalizations about the impact of coffee cultivation on societies that employ these recent insights have been rare.

The main purpose of this essay is to trace the changing perspectives applied to the historical study of coffee societies and to suggest that the current trend in history towards deconstructing categories and exploding verities,

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while salutary, should perhaps return to seeking patterns through bounded generalizations that ask broader questions about the commonalities shared by coffee producers and the degrees of freedom of action that local producers enjoy. In other words, does coffee production impose certain structures and world views?

In a recent issue of the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, Eric Van Young suggested that we should “take another look at economic history as cultural history.”¹ Many of the recent students of coffee societies have done just that. The challenge is to go from particular historically-grounded cases to broader generalizations. This not only accentuates the importance of the study of the past but brings to life the historical economic actors who too often are caricatured as predictable “economically rational men.” By marrying social, cultural, and economic history, historians can accentuate the limitations of neoliberal analyses that are currently animating Latin American economic policy at a considerable detriment to the peoples of Latin America.

The Way We Think

Social and cultural historians have argued against grand theories or master narratives. To a considerable degree, marxism has been replaced by poststructuralism, which favors decentered, unstable, heterogeneous, and multiple identities. The subjective attitudes and acts of individuals or groups supersede class analysis by emphasizing human agency and diversity. In other words, the deconstruction of categories, such as race, gender, and national identity, have subsumed class. The notion of reason in history (teleology) and greater social structures are reduced by a stress on contingency, disjunctures, and fluidity. Ambiguities undercut certainties.²

In contrast, the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of communism have also encouraged very different self-assured movements such as rational choice and neoliberalism that are very much grand theories undergirded by a positivistic faith in empirical evidence and general laws. The international

1. Eric Van Young, “The New Cultural History Comes to Old Mexico,” *HAHR* 79 (1999): 238.

2. Four recent works discuss many of these tendencies: John Beverley, Jose Oviedo, and Michael Aronna, eds., *The Postmodernism Debate in Latin America* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1995); Lynn Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989); Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: Norton, 1994); and Quentin Skinner, *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985).

penetration of the world economy has led these theorists to posit homogeneous, economically rational people whose search for gain and self-interest are rather predictable. These tendencies, particularly noticeable in economics and political science, are very much structural and materialist. Rather than the local and particular, they stress the global and the general.³ Individuals are subordinated to the rationality of the broader capitalist system.⁴ The struggle between structure and contingency, large systems and individual will is evident in the studies of coffee.

Why Coffee?

Studying larger theoretical trends through the lens of coffee might seem to cloud the issue. But this is not an exercise in “coffee fetishism.”⁵ Coffee is a commodity worthy of serious attention because of the central and long-standing place it has held in the world economy and in the life of millions of people. One of the few holdovers from the era of the spice trade and mercantilism, coffee has been a major trade good since the sixteenth century. Indeed, it may well be the most valuable internationally-traded agricultural commodity in history. Spreading out from Yemen, coffee is now produced in over one hundred countries on four continents. In Latin America it has been the most ubiquitous of exports. Latin America continues to produce more than twice as much coffee as the rest of the world combined. Even in the mid-1980s, coffee was the principal export of seven Latin American countries and the second export of another two making it by far the most important agricultural export (and second overall in value to petroleum).⁶

3. For a thoughtful essay on the uses and limits of rational choice, see Barbara Geddes, “Uses and Limitations of Rational Choice,” in *Latin America in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Peter H. Smith (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995). New institutional economics, which attempts to marry classical economic concerns of the market and the individual with historically specific institutional settings, is a mix of developmental economics and neoclassical economics; for example, see John Harriss, Janet Hunter, and Colin M. Lewis, eds., *The New Institutional Economics and Third World Development* (London: Routledge, 1995).

4. As neoliberal guru Albert Dunlap put it while discussing the human cost of corporate restructuring: “Layoffs are a good thing . . . Layoffs are crucial to growth. The more layoffs in a particular area, the more business starts and the more long-term economic growth.” See “Does America Still Work,” *Harper’s Magazine* (May 1996): 41.

5. I owe this felicitous (though incorrect, in my opinion) term to Elizabeth Dore.

6. Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 9. For a brief overview of the history of coffee, see Steven C. Topik, “Coffee,” in *The Cambridge World History of Food and Nutrition*, ed.

But why should one assume that there would be any similarity among different coffee-based societies? Allen Wells and I have recently argued for the usefulness of a commodity-centered approach rather than the more common nation-centered perspective.⁷ This stems from a central observation of Karl Marx: “[Man] begins to distinguish himself from the animal the moment he begins to *produce* his means of subsistence, a step required by his physical organization. By producing food, man indirectly produces his material life itself . . . What they [individuals] are, therefore, coincides with *what* they produce and *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions which determine their production.”⁸ But rather than just subsistence, this soon became the activity of local and then international exchange: “The needs of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.”⁹ To dreadfully mix my metaphors, export products became both the umbilical cords and social motors of Latin American societies, especially after the middle of the nineteenth century. Being born and animated by similar impulses does not mean that all societies came out the same. The motor was not driving a social steamroller, flattening all participants into homogeneous pieces of a puzzle. Local social relations, prior history, cultural understandings, and political power all mediated the impact of coffee in Latin America. Indeed, the comparative study of coffee societies is useful precisely because it allows us to understand the extent of the freedom of action that local producers enjoyed.

K. Kipple (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, forthcoming); Ralph S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1985); and Antoinette Schnyder-v. Waldkirch, *Wie Europa den Kaffee Entdeckte* (Zurich: Jacobs Suchard Museum, 1988).

7. Steven C. Topik and Allen Wells, eds., *The Second Conquest of Latin America: Coffee, Henequen, and Oil during the Export Boom, 1850–1930* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1998).

8. Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, eds. and trans. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor Books, 1967), 409.

9. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1975), 37. Marx points out that the dominance of international exchange is a product of free trade and bourgeois society; it is not natural: “What Adam Smith, in true eighteenth-century style, places in the prehistoric period, puts before history, is in fact its product.” See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der kritik der politischen ökonomie*, ed. and trans. David McLellan (London: Macmillan, 1971), 65.

Early Views of Coffee

The earliest people involved in the coffee trade used *coffea arabica* as a commodity for commercial exchange. Since production for three centuries was done in small gardens in remote parts of Yemen, a country rarely visited by Arab or European merchants, coffee was viewed simply as a resource from which merchants could profit and governments could extract taxes. Thus discussion of coffee's social or political consequences were limited to its consumption: Was the arabica permitted by Islam?; Were coffeeshouses centers of intrigue and subversion?¹⁰ Similar questions were raised about European cafes.¹¹

The analysis of coffee and its implications changed when commercial capital began directly controlling production through colonial impositions. Once the Dutch took the arabica to Java, Ceylon, and Dutch Guyana, the French to Bourbon, French Guyana, Martinique, St. Domingue and indirectly to Brazil, the British to India and Jamaica, and the Spanish to Cuba, coffee became an object of mercantilist analysis. The Dutch East Indies Company and other colonists began imposing coffee cultivation to increase the value of the colonies and enrich the mother countries and trading companies. As an exotic tropical commodity in demand in Europe, it was a natural product for the colonial division of labor. In Java local labor was coerced into producing coffee, but in most other places African slaves were combined with European capital to grow the Arabian bush and integrate the various parts of the system for the advantage of the metropolis.¹² There was not much concern about the local consequences in the colonies except the extent to which swelling exports tightened colonial bonds and filled metropolitan coffers.

10. See Carsten Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und anderen umliegenden Landern* (1774; reprint, Hamburg: Friedrich Perthes, 1837); John Ovington, *A Voyage to Suratt in the Year 1689* (London: Jacob Tonfon, 1696); Jean de la Roque, *A Voyage to Arabia the Happy* (London: G. Strahan, 1726); and Jean de Thevenot, *The Travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant* (London: H. Farthmore, 1686).

11. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants*, trans. David Jacobsen (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

12. See G. Angoulvant, *Les indes neerlandaises: leur role dans l'economie internationale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Le Monde Nouveau, 1926); John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1820); A.S. Kok, "Coffee Culture, Chiefly in Java," in *Colonial Essays*, ed. A.S. Kok (London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1864); J.W.B. Money, *Java; or How to Manage a Colony* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1861); James D. Tracy, ed., *The Rise of Merchant Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990); and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Motion in the System: Coffee, Color, and Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Saint-Domingue," *Review* 5, no. 3 (1982).

The attacks of Physiocrats and other Liberals, such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo, on mercantilism together with independence movements in Latin America helped change the angle through which coffee production was viewed. International trade was no longer a zero-sum game directed by states, with winners and losers; now all participants could profit from their comparative advantage in the international division of labor by removing colonial and other state impediments to trade. The international struggle became more economic than political. Rather than serving as a resource for statecraft and empire building, coffee and other export products suddenly became tools for self-enrichment of its producers and traders. The liberal free-trade outlook became particularly popular in nineteenth-century Latin America after the colonial empires ended and nation-states had to be built. Although coffee was just one of many natural riches, it was lumped together with all other export products that jointly demonstrated the wealth of the soil.¹³

Coffee, specifically, was not much the object of study until late in the nineteenth century in Latin America. Only Brazil was a major exporter after the devastating effects of St. Domingue's wars for independence and before Spanish America planted arabica on any scale. Even in Brazil, the developmental discourse was rather limited in the nineteenth century; for most of the century members of the ruling class and scholars (who tended to overlap) believed that social and political peace were the principal goals. These were mostly achieved through laws, constitutions, and particularly the leadership of great men and astute patriarchal clans. The success of coffee was evidence of the fact that *Deus é Brasileiro* because of the natural wealth of the soil and climate. Aside from a few planters' manuals and debates over the morality and efficacy of slavery, coffee production was little analyzed.¹⁴ Few records and little data were available—there was only one fairly reliable census in the nineteenth century (1872), and little institutionalization of credit, land, or labor markets. Planters often did not know how many hectares of land they owned nor how many trees they planted to the hectare; there were no schools of agronomy and the first experimental station was only founded in 1887. Individual growers adapted to local conditions on an ad hoc basis. Brazilian fazendeiros' suc-

13. Ricardo Salvatore, "The Strength of Markets in Latin America's Sociopolitical Discourse, 1750–1850: Some Preliminary Observations," *Latin American Perspectives* 104 (1999).

14. Nabuco offers one of the most probing critiques of the slave system; however, he focuses on the problem of the slave system rather than exports per se. See Joaquim Nabuco, *O abolicionismo* (London: Kingdon, 1883), 167.

cess at overwhelming and expanding the world market for coffee, however, proved to them that their trial and error methods sufficed. Formal agronomic study was not necessary. The Brazilian elite was much more interested in modernizing the cities than developing the countryside.¹⁵ This was true throughout Latin America.

Twentieth-Century Views

The study of coffee is largely a twentieth-century phenomenon, and the guiding concerns have been economic development and political democracy (stability) rather than colonial revenues, balance of trade, or state building. The most common perspective before the Depression of the 1930s was that coffee modernized the economy by strengthening Latin America's link to Europe and the United States in order to obtain the missing resources necessary for economic development: capital, profits, tax revenues, modern technology, vigorous immigrants, and entrepreneurial mentalities. It was widely believed that the countries of Latin America were not sufficiently developed because of a distorting colonial heritage and domestic lethargy. Once the early-nineteenth-century faith in the transformative power of good laws was dashed upon the rocks of experience, liberalism adopted a more positivist face that stressed central guidance, particularly in the economy. A widespread self-disdain among the elite led to the belief that relief would only come from outside. The wealth of the soil was not sufficient to bring prosperity. The home market was too poor and the native population too indolent to buy goods, pro-

15. Franz W. Dafert, *Über die gegenwärtige Lage des Kaffeebaus in Brasilien* (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy, 1898); and idem, *Principes de culture rationnelle du café au Brésil* (Paris: Augustin Challand, 1900). See also Warren Dean, *Rio Claro: A Brazilian Plantation System, 1820–1920* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1976); idem, *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995); Stanley Stein, *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958); and Steven C. Topik, “Representações nacionais do cafeicultor: Ze Prado e Juan Valdez,” *Revista Brasileira de História* 15 (1995): 157–72. For more information regarding the European manuals, see Mario Samper K., “Modelos vs. practicas: acercamiento inicial a la cuestión tecnológica en algunos manuales sobre caficultura, 1774–1895,” *Revista de Historia* 30 (1994): 11–40; for a discussion of issues related to modernization in Costa Rica, see Carlos Naranjo G., “La primera modernización de la caficultura costarricense (1890–1950),” *Revista de Historia* 36 (1997): 79–106. In the preface to his manual, which was first published in 1878, Matias Romero noted that there was so little interest that only two or three copies were sold. For details see Matias Romero, *Coffee and India-Rubber Culture in Mexico* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), 5.

vide capital, or take advantage of advanced technology. The relative poverty that resulted led to political quarrels that further deepened the poverty and hindered the construction of a transportation and institutional infrastructure. Rather than seeking an autarkic process of capital accumulation and self-help, most Latin American elites looked to the international market as the savior. Before World War II, most students of Latin American economies did not view this outward-looking posture as an imperialist imposition but rather as a domestically deduced solution for internal problems.¹⁶

Most analysts focused on the study of exports in general rather than coffee per se. Using a fairly high level of abstraction, all export commodities, at least agricultural ones, tended to be lumped together because they all required the same basic ingredients: land, labor, capital, production technology, and transportation. In Latin American countries, exports generated capital to create a financial system, an internal market, and a stable nation-state that were needed to attract foreign and, to a lesser extent, national capital to invest in the infrastructure and modernize the cities. A market mentality, entrepreneurship, and national identity were to follow lockstep. Even marxist critics of capitalism and imperialism shared many of the basic assumptions of modernizing liberals: Europe was holding a mirror of Latin America's future, spreading bourgeois praxis, and creating new capitalist classes and consciousness.

These perspectives shared fundamental assumptions: a capitalist teleology that saw the materialist structural forces of the system imposing themselves on all people in a unilinear (though perhaps dialectical) and homogenizing process. Political processes, ideologies, and cultures were epiphenomena, manifestations of the shifting tectonic plates of the economy. Individuals could seize or ignore opportunities, but the opportunities themselves were created by the larger structures. One could debate whether competition and the search for profit drove societies and history or whether it was the result of a class

16. This is certainly a simplified version of a more complicated constellation of developmental ideas in the nineteenth century. For the debates see Marcello Carmagnani, *Estado y mercado* (Mexico City: Colégio de Mexico, 1994); Paul Gootenberg, *Imagining Development: Economic Development and Economic Ideas in Peru's Fictitious Prosperity of Guano, 1840–1880* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993); Joseph L. Love and Nils Jacobsen, eds., *Guiding the Invisible Hand: Economic Liberalism and the State in Latin American History* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Nils Jacobsen, *Mirages of Transition: The Peruvian Altiplano, 1780–1930* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993); Steven C. Topik, *The Political Economy of the Brazilian State, 1889–1930* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1987); and Richard Weiner, "Competing Market Discourses in Porfirian Mexico," *Latin American Perspectives* 26 (1999).

struggle, but the metaforces and direction of history were clear in both cases. All people tended to be lumped together as upper class, middle class, or working class, with some distinctions between urban and rural peoples. Cultural, ethnic, and gender differences were largely ignored or seen as remnants of earlier precapitalist formations that would disappear with development or with the socialist revolution. There was a widespread belief that Latin America would follow the same stages of development as Europe with the same attending class formations and political forms, although some ethnic groups would be completely marginalized and banished from the nation. Capitalist development was applauded either because of its educational and eventual spread effects or because it strengthened the internal contradictions that allowed capitalism to be superseded by socialism. Thus coffee was usually viewed as just one commodity among many, one that could be a “leading sector” in Walt Rostow’s words, but not one with any special characteristics.¹⁷

A partial challenge to these broader currents came in developmental economics. In particular, Albert Hirschman, taking off from staple theory, which had focused on grain production, noted that different commodities produced different spread effects, different social consequences, and thus had different economic consequences. While still subscribing to much of the modernizing metanarrative, he gave coffee its own life and possibilities that inhered in the commodity’s botany and production process rather than being imposed by the world economy and economic laws in general. Indeed, Hirschman argued that the nature of coffee production and processing may have stimulated native entrepreneurship and industrial development.¹⁸

Some of the central tenets of the modernizing perspective were brought into question with the rise of dependency analysis in the 1960s by people such as Paul Baran, Andre Gunder Frank, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and Samir Amin, who applied the insights of Leon Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, and later Raúl Prebisch, who worked for the United Nation’s Economic Commission for Latin America (hereafter E.C.L.A.). Instead of one homogenizing world trend, *dependentistas* argued that the metropolitan countries in western Europe and the United States set the international rules of the game to their own

17. Walt W. Rostow, *The World Economy* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1978), 366–70.

18. Albert Hirschman, “A Generalized Linkage Approach to Development, with Special Reference to Staples,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 25 (1977), supplement: 67–98. Also see John Richards, “The Staple Debates,” in *Explorations in Canadian Economic History: Essays in Honour of Irene Spry*, ed. Cameron Duncan (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1985).

advantage while countries in the Third World were destined to lag behind or even become ever more underdeveloped. Although this materialist structuralist view still posited the central importance of the economy and especially the international economy, and still believed history had an eventual direction, it did not believe that the Third World could follow the same course as Western Europe to reach “development.” Dependencistas broke with the theory of stages of development. Indeed, they believed that integration into the international economy often brought “backwardness,” repressive and oligarchic political systems, and impoverished, unequal social systems because the imperialist center sucked up capital rather than investing it abroad. Exploitation, not diffusion, was capitalism’s principal motor. While moving away from a uniform narrative, dependencistas still flattened the Third World, assuming that it was all much the same. Rather than class analysis there was national analysis, with the metropolitan countries and comprador elites exploiting the rather homogeneous Third World countries. The solution, socialist revolution, was never closely explained. Since the nation and the world economy became the categories of analysis, specific commodities did not receive much attention. Famous dependencista studies of Brazil, such as those by Andre Gunder Frank, Teotonio dos Santos, and Celso Furtado, saw coffee as only one example of the larger structure of metropolitan domination. Indeed, Frank in his seminal study, half of which was on Brazil, did not even study coffee. (Cardoso and Faletto differed in their emphasis on national and local variation, but they stressed political manifestations rather than commodities.)¹⁹

Concepts such as comprador elite were popular. Although much emphasis was placed on the role of the international economy and foreign investors, very few dependencista or modernizationist studies actually examined their machinations. Even fewer examined specific export sectors. The one commodity that did receive attention was sugar, but not because of fascination with the usefulness of commodity analysis but rather because of interest in slave studies and the independence movements of the Caribbean. The best known economic his-

19. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependência e desenvolvimento na América Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1970); Andre Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967); Celso Furtado, *The Economic Growth of Brazil*, trans. Ricardo W. de Aguiar and Eric Charles Drysdale (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964); and idem, *A fantasia organizada* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985). Also see Ronald Chilcote, *Theories of Development and Underdevelopment* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984); Cristobal Kay, *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment* (New York: Routledge, 1989); and Ian Roxborough, *Theories of Underdevelopment* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979).

tories concentrated on national economies rather than commodities. One of the principal studies to focus on a number of commodities ignored coffee.²⁰

The small monographic literature on coffee concentrated on specific case studies. Stanley Stein and Warren Dean each examined one coffee municipio. Only one of the excellent studies in the pathbreaking collections edited by Kenneth Duncan and Ian Rutledge (in which only four of the eighteen articles dealt with coffee) and by Enrique Florescano (in which only three of the twenty-one essays examined coffee plantations) used the comparative method and focused on sugar, not coffee.²¹ Indeed, aside from Ciro Cardoso's justly admired essay on Central America, comparative studies of coffee economies were ignored. Brazil (responsible for over half of the coffee exported during the boom), whenever it was included in discussions of coffee systems, was treated as a homogeneous unity that reflected the São Paulo reality or, if dealing with slavery, the reality of Vassouras. Within Brazil there have been few efforts to compare different regional systems within the nation much less

20. For one of the best studies of a collaborator elite, see Gilbert M. Joseph and Allen Wells, "International Harvester and the Henequen Marketing System in Yucatán, 1898–1915," *Latin American Research Review* 17, no. 1 (1982). Their article was based on the insights of John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 1–15. Also see Oswaldo Sunkel with Pedro Paz, *El subdesarrollo latinoamericano y la teoría del desarrollo* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1975); Roberto Cortés Conde, *The First Stages of Modernization in Spanish America*, trans. Toby Talbot (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Celso Furtado, *Economic Development of Latin America: Historical Background and Contemporary Problems*, trans. Suzette Macedo (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976). The exception is Jonathan Levin, *The Export Economies: Their Pattern of Development in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960). Sugar was the first commodity to receive much comparative attention because of the spread of slave studies. For a rather recent overview, see Philip D. Curtin, *The Rise and Fall of the Plantation Complex* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990). It was not until the 1980s that historians began to study other sectors from a comparative perspective; for example, see D.C.M. Platt and Guido di Tella, eds., *Australia and Canada* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Jeremy Adelman, *Frontier Development* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994); Carl Solberg, *The Prairies and the Pampas* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1987); and Charles Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1986). Bergquist was the only historian to include coffee in his analysis of labor systems. Indeed, sectoral analysis was more common among scholars, such as D.C.M. Platt, who argued against the concept of imperialism or dependency. See D.C.M. Platt, ed., *Business Imperialism* (Cambridge: Clarendon Press, 1977).

21. Kenneth Duncan and Ian Rutledge, eds., *Land and Labor in Latin America* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977); and Enrique Florescano, ed., *Haciendas, latifundios y plantaciones en América Latina* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1975).

compare with other countries. Instead, rather simplistic caricatures of the heroic Paulista fazendeiro were briefly counterpoised to the supposedly backward planters of other states. Indeed, what appeared to be a geographic comparison was in fact often a contrast of two ideal types: capitalist and slave agriculture.²²

Ten Propositions on Coffee

A general set of propositions arose, nonetheless, that tended to be applied to all export crops alike. Coffee was just another case of the general rule. The nation-state, the unit of analysis, was assumed rather homogenous so that regional case studies could reveal a picture of the whole. Export growers tended to be grouped together as planters rather than hacendados in the famous Wolf-Mintz model or sometimes, adopting Lenin's model, as Junkers rather than farmers.²³ Of course, since the former model was formulated in the 1950s with the Caribbean's capitalist sugar plantations in mind and the latter with Russia's neofeudal economy, the models had to be somewhat adapted to be applied in the Latin American historical context. A constellation of attributes were deduced from the export model. These general propositions are as follows:

1. Export-oriented latifundia: Exports such as coffee were grown in response to the demands of the world economy on extensive landholdings

22. Ciro Cardoso, "Historia económica del café en Centroamérica," *Estudios sociales centroamericanos* 10, no. 3 (1975); and José Roberto Amaral Lapa, *A economia cafeeira* (São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1983); also see Abriel Bittencourt, "O esforço industrializante na República do Café: o caso do Espírito Santo, 1889–1930," and Luís Carlos Soares, "A manufatura na sociedade escravista: o surto manufatureiro no Rio de Janeiro e nas suas circunvizinhanças (1840–1870)," in *La préindustrialisation du Brésil: Essais sur une économie en transition, 1830/50–1930/50*, ed. Frédéric Mauro (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984); Zélia Maria Cardoso de Mello, *Metamorfoses da riqueza* (São Paulo: Editora de Humanismo, Ciência e Tecnologia [hereafter HUCITEC], 1985); and Tamas Szmrecsanyi, *Pequena história da agricultura no Brasil* (São Paulo: Ed. Contexto, 1990). For regional studies on Paraná, Rio de Janeiro, and Minas Gerais see Gabriel Bittencourt, *Café e modernização* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Cátedra, 1987); Nadir Aparecida Cancian, *Cafeicultura paranaense, 1900/1970* (Curtiba: Grafipar e Secretaria de Cultura Paraná, 1981); Hebe Maria Mattos de Castro, *Ao sul da história* (São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1987); and João Heraldo Lima, *Café e indústria em Minas Gerais, 1870–1920* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1981).

23. Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz, "Haciendas y plantaciones en Mesoamérica y las Antillas," in Florescano, *Haciendas latifundios y plantaciones*, 493–531.

that were often thought of as either a colonial hold over or part of the nineteenth-century Liberal giveaway of national and indigenous lands.²⁴

2. Landlord capitalism: Land was the most important input and *latifundiários* cum landlords were therefore the most important economic actors. Relatively little attention was paid to intermediary actors who were thought to be foreigners and as such conspirators against the true development of the economy.

3. Monoculture: The drive to export brought specialization. The crop was produced on demesne lands overseen by the planter and his *mayordomos* with resident labor. Foodstuffs had to be purchased from others.

4. Economies of scale: Although the technology was not especially sophisticated, it was beyond the reach of peasants. Economies of scale, in addition to political influence, helped explain the large scale of production since some planters were astute agriculturalists.

5. Planters as progressive: These technically sophisticated coffee agriculturalists were more progressive than the internally-oriented hacendados who were tied to the precapitalist colonial heritage. Exporters were more progressive because of their interest in a capitalist legal framework to protect property rights and their role in creating a transportation infrastructure, capital accumulation, and eventually wage labor.

6. State builders: Coffee planters created liberal nation-states and brought political peace among the elite. These coffee republics were run by the planter class. As liberals, planters favored laissez-faire and free trade policies. The growth of coffee was a result of liberal reforms, but nation-states directly played a small role in coffee economies.

7. Frontier thesis: Coffee was a frontier crop that expanded into “virgin” unused land and hence had no opportunity costs. Vacant land was being incorporated into the civilized world.

8. Homogeneous workers: After the end of slavery, agricultural workers tended to be male and usually ladino though little attention was paid to

24. There were some national literatures that associated coffee with small landholdings in Colombia, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic despite the fact that several authors in these countries stressed the importance of large-scale coffee production.

gender and race. The indigenous population was marginalized or ladinoized by the advance of export crops.

9. Coercion and revolt: Workers were often coerced either through slavery or government imposition. This may have been indirectly a good thing as their involvement in the monied export crop brought them into the national economy and national life as a rural proletariat. Export workers were conceived of as potential revolutionaries because they were undergoing rapid change that challenged the traditional underpinnings of power.²⁵

10. Coffee and industry: Coffee was the export crop most likely to foment industrialization as evidenced by São Paulo, Antioquia, and San Salvador. But there was considerable difference of opinion with some dependentistas arguing that a healthy coffee sector precluded true industrialization.

Although there were certainly disagreements about these propositions based upon political perspectives and the time period examined, I contend that most students of Latin America would have agreed with these characterizations. However, in the last two decades, and particularly the last few years, much of this has come into question. It turns out that many of these generalizations were more applicable to sugar and bananas than coffee. Our current view of export societies in general, and coffee societies in particular have refined, qualified, and even cast out most of these propositions because of recent research based, in part, on new questions and new categories of analysis.

Revisionists

Concern with race relations led to serious reevaluations of the nature of export economies in general and coffee's place in particular national lives. Slave studies flourished, yielding some of the most important local coffee studies: Stanley Stein's *Vassouras*, Emília Viotti da Costa's *Da senzala a colônia*,

25. Although Charles Bergquist focused on the revolutionary potential of export workers in general, he concluded that Colombian coffee workers were not revolutionary because of the nature of land reform there. See Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America*. Interestingly, Jeffery M. Paige did not make similar conclusions about coffee workers in Peru and Angola during the 1960s. See Jeffrey M. Paige, *Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World* (New York: The Free Press, 1975).

and Warren Dean's *Rio Claro*.²⁶ These scholars were more concerned with slavery and race relations than with the functioning of the coffee economy, but our understanding of coffee systems benefited greatly. Their research and other works on slavery led to debates over whether one could characterize Brazilian social formation as capitalist or slave or some intermediary position. The result was an increased focus on labor systems (to which neither the modernization, imperialist, or dependency school had paid great attention) and the use of modes of production analysis that emphasized historical layers of articulated labor systems. Both innovations would have important impacts on the study of coffee in countries other than Brazil where slavery was never important in growing coffee. The debate over the extent to which the coffee labor system could be termed capitalist in Brazil carried forward to the study of the immigrant colono experience that followed abolition undertaken by Emilia Viotti da Costa, Warren Dean, Thomas Holloway, Verena Stolcke, José de Souza Martins, and Mauricio Font. They found a heterogeneous system that combined elements of wage labor, sharecropping, and subsistence agriculture.²⁷

The reevaluation of the historical evolution of coffee economies in Spanish America grew out of debates over her "feudal" background, the role of imperialism, and state building as well as concerns over the treatment of peasants in general and indigenous peoples in particular. Modernization theorists posited a dual society, one capitalist in the cities and one feudal in the countryside, while dependentistas such as Frank countered that Latin America had been capitalist since its insertion into the capitalist world economy under the Iberian colonial powers. This debate, and a rising tide of popular revolutions

26. Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Da senzala a colônia* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro [hereafter DIFEL], 1966); Dean, *Rio Claro*; and Stein, *Vassouras*.

27. Thomas Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980); José de Souza Martins, *O cativo da terra* (São Paulo: HUCITEC, 1986); Verena Stolcke, *Coffee Planters, Workers, and Wives* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988); Mauricio Font, "Labor System and Collective Action in A Coffee Economy: São Paulo," in *Coffee, Society and Power in Latin America*, ed. William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper K. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995); Brasílio Sallum Jr., *Capitalismo e cafeicultura Oeste-Paulista 1888-1930* (São Paulo: Livraria Duas Cidades, 1982); Ciro Cardoso, *Agricultura, escravidão e capitalismo* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1979); and Jacobo Gorender, *O escravismo colonial* (São Paulo: Ed. Atica, 1978). Also see Nancy Naro, *A Slave's Place, A Master's World: Fashioning Dependency: Rural Brazil* (London: Casell's, forthcoming).

internationally, led to intense discussions about the peasantry's rationality, functional role, and potential. Combining ethnohistory with studies developed to hinder or encourage rural guerilla warfare (in Southeast Asia as well as Latin America), peasant studies began reevaluating the essentialized and romanticized categories of earlier historical and anthropological works. One solution was the adoption of the notion of a peasant mode of production propounded by Russian thinker A.V. Chayanov.²⁸ Others devised much more heterogeneous social formations with numerous articulated modes of production. The definition of peasant changed as they no longer were seen as strictly subsistence farmers with few links to national or international markets.

The shift of focus from economic development and democratization, which concentrated on the elite and the process of capital accumulation, to an emphasis on peasants changed the terms of the debate. Peasant agency and resistance, and new conceptions of power became the guiding watchwords rather than repression and victimization. Historians such as E.P. Thompson, political scientists such as James Scott, anthropologists such as Karl Polanyi, Michael Taussig, Marshal Sahlins, and Clifford Geertz, and social theorists such as Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault became influential.²⁹ Since resistance and power were not necessarily structural and overtly political but rather took everyday forms, local culture became a key concern. Microstudies of local resistance naturally revealed a far more complicated and varied story than the eagle-eye structuralist approaches had presented.

More recently, historians have turned to seeing peasants not only resisting at the local level, but participating in state formation and national identity creation as the issue of nationalism has again become popular.³⁰ Since peas-

28. I am grateful to Julie Charlip for this discussion of perceptions of the peasantry. See Julie Charlip, "Cultivating Coffee: Farmers, Land and Money in Nicaragua, 1877–1930" (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 1995), 385–88; and idem, "Cultivating Coffee: The Farmers of Carazo, Nicaragua, 1880–1930" (unpublished manuscript). See also Mark Harrison, "Chayanov and the Economics of the Russian Peasantry," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 11 (1978); and Samuel L. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant: The Political Society of Rural Society in Vietnam* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979).

29. James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976); idem, *The Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985); Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980); Clifford Geertz, *Agricultural Involvement* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963); and E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1993).

30. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, eds., *Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State: The Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic*

ants seemed to act in many different and somewhat unpredictable ways with important consequences, cultural and mode of production analyses (which complemented each other) have freed the political and ideological realms from their servitude to the economic base, though the material conditions of life are still usually recognized as shaping political, ideological, and cultural responses.

All of this has revolutionized the study of Latin American coffee economies with the greatest part of the work coming recently in studies of Central America. I should point out that most of the new studies seek to question received wisdom and ask new questions rather than construct new models. Consequently they often eschew generalizations. Since they are often local studies of areas of small coffee production, it is unclear how to evaluate the various cases. If we are interested in the effects of coffee on Latin American societies (unlike most of the authors discussed here), then presumably the areas with the greatest production would receive the most weight in generalizations about coffee. If, on the other hand, we are concerned with a specific national or local histories or the political possibilities that coffee cultivation provides, the range of experiences rather than the number of people involved, is most relevant.

Most of the new studies are monographic and local, but a few comparative studies are beginning to emerge.³¹ Let me briefly sketch how the recent

Caribbean (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1998); Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, *An Agrarian Republic: Commercial Agriculture and the Politics of Peasant Communities in El Salvador, 1823–1914* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1999); Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995); Jeffery M. Paige, *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997); Mario Samper K., *Producción cafetalera y poder político en Centroamérica* (San José: Colección Ruedo del Tiempo, 1998); and Robert G. Williams, *States and Social Evolution: Coffee and the Rise of National Governments in Central America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995).

31. Lowell Gudmundson, "Lord and Peasant in the Making of Modern Central America," in *Agrarian Structure and Political Power*, ed. Evelyn Huber and Frank Safford (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1995), 151–76; Paige, *Coffee and Power*; Héctor Pérez Brignoli, "Crecimiento agroexportador y regimenes políticos en Centroamérica: un ensayo de historia comparada," in *Tierra, café y sociedad*, ed. Héctor Pérez Brignoli and Mario Samper K. (San José: Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales [hereafter FLACSO], 1994), 25–54; William Roseberry, "Introduction," in Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Samper K., *Coffee, Society, and Power*, 1–37; Mario Samper K., "Los paisajes sociales del café: reflexiones comparadas," and "El significado social de la caficultura costarricense y salvadoreña," in Pérez Brignoli and Samper K., *Tierra, café y sociedad*, 9–24 and 117–226; and Samper K., "In Difficult Times: Colombian and Costa Rican Coffee Growers from Prosperity to Crisis, 1920–1936," in

work has challenged the previous understanding of Latin American coffee societies.

Ten New Propositions

1.

Coffee did not begin as an export crop demanded by the world economy in many countries nor was it always dominated by latifundia. In areas such as St. Domingue, Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador coffee began as a product for local consumption, not export. Indeed, these countries were initially coffee importers. Peruvians produced for themselves; they began by exporting it to their Latin American neighbors in Bolivia and Chile, not to the United States. And the home market continued to be important at times.³² It is true that during the height of the coffee boom (1880–1930), probably more than 90 percent of Latin America's coffee was exported and the coffee producing countries did not develop coffee house cultures. However, in the last few decades, in the most important coffee exporting economies, the domestic population has consumed an ever greater portion of production. Brazil has recently passed Germany as the second largest coffee consumer in the world.

Having started out as a garden crop for home consumption, it is not surprising that studies of Colombia and Central America quite quickly demonstrated that in many areas the latifundio was not the norm. Although it is true that areas such as Santander, Colombia, the cacao growing areas of Venezuela, southern Mexico, and important parts of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua had larger holdings, in much of Costa Rica small growers prevailed, as they did in Antioquia and the Cauca Valley of Colombia, the Andean area

Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Samper K., *Coffee, Society, and Power*, 151–80; Verena Stolcke, "The Labors of Coffee in Latin America: The Hidden Charm of Family Labor and Self-Provisioning," in *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America*, 65–93; Williams, *States and Social Evolution*; and Douglas Yarrington, *A Coffee Frontier, Land, Society, and Politics in Duaca, Venezuela, 1830–1936* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 196–212.

32. Trouillot, "Motion in the System"; Karl Sartorius, *Mexico Around 1850* (Stuttgart: Brockhaus, 1961) 175; Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, "La introducción del café en El Salvador," in Pérez Brignoli and Samper K., *Tierra, café y sociedad*, 76; Williams, *States and Social Evolution*; and Paulo Drinot De Echave, "Peru, 1889–1930: A Beggar Sitting on a Gold Mine?" (paper presented at the Latin American Export Economy Workshop, Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, Dec. 1996).

of Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and Honduras.³³ Recent studies demonstrate the prevalence of small and medium growers around Granada and Carazo, Nicaragua and around Santa Ana in El Salvador.³⁴ Veracruz and Oaxaca in Mexico also had few latifundia. Even in Brazil, especially in important parts of Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, medium and small producers predominated as they did in Espirito Santo and Paraná.³⁵ Clearly coffee yielded many different scales of landholdings.

Nowhere were large holdings simply a colonial legacy, though some *sesmarias* in Brazil provided the foundations of early coffee fazendas. Stone traced much of the Central American elite back to colonial ancestors, but they were often not large-scale landowners.³⁶ Neither was the nineteenth-century export boom one large land grab, since many smaller holders were

33. William Roseberry, *Coffee and Capitalism in the Venezuelan Highlands* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1983); Marco Palacios, *Coffee in Colombia, 1850–1950* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980); Eduardo Baumeister, “El café en Honduras,” in Pérez Brignoli and Samper K., *Tierra, café y sociedad*, 437–94; Lowell Gudmundson, *Costa Rica before Coffee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1986); Mario Samper K., *Generations of Settlers* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); and Laird W. Bergad, *Coffee and the Growth of Agrarian Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983).

34. Charlip, “Cultivating Coffee”; idem, “That the Land Takes on Value,” *Latin American Perspectives* 26, no. 2 (1999): 65–91; idem, “‘At Their Own Risk’: Coffee Farmers and Debt in Nicaragua, 1870–1930,” in Chomsky and Lauria-Santiago, *Identity and Struggle*, 94–121; Elizabeth Dore, “Land Privatization and the Differentiation of the Peasantry: Nicaragua’s Coffee Revolution, 1850–1920,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 8, no. 3 (1995): 303–26; and Lauria-Santiago, *Agrarian Republic*. Robert Williams discusses the wide extent of small and middle holdings in Central America, even in countries such as Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador where the latifundia prevail. Even lands that pass for latifundia in Central America would qualify for medium-sized holdings in most of South America. See Williams, *States and Social Evolution*.

35. Nancy Naro, “Customary Rightholders and Legal Claimants,” *The Americas* XLVIII (1992): 408; Hildete Pereira de Melo, “O café e a economia fluminense: 1889–1920,” in *História econômica da Primeira República*, ed. Sergio S. Silva and Tamás Szmrecsányi (São Paulo: HUCITEC; FAPESP, 1996), 215–34; and Heraldo Lima, *Café e indústria*. Also see Ligia Maria Osorio Silva, “A Apropriação territorial na Primeira República,” in Silva and Szmrecsányi, *História econômica*, 169. She argues that even in the area of large latifundios, “seria possível falarse no exercício de uma hegemonia por parte dos grandes fazendeiros organizada em torno do continuado acesso às terras devolutas, e integrando de modo subordinado os pequenos posseiros.”

36. See Eduardo Silva, *Barões e escravidão* (Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Nova Fronteira, 1984); Darell Levi, *The Prados of Brazil* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1987); and Samuel Z. Stone, *The Heritage of the Conquistadors* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1990).

able to hold on to or obtain land.³⁷ In fact, in many countries the scale of holdings diminished throughout the twentieth century, at least until the Green Revolution after the 1960s.³⁸ In Costa Rica, Mario Samper found the distribution of land under coffee more equal than that of other crops.³⁹

Most studies of peasant land tenure simply discuss the division of territory among the landed, implying some sort of rural democracy when property is predominantly small- and medium-sized. One factor that is too little discussed when debating the distribution of land, however, is the percentage of landless people. That is, numerous smallholders did not necessarily constitute an egalitarian rural regime. In the 1930s only 3.8 percent of *Costarricenses* and 0.6 percent of *Salvadoreños* owned any land at all.⁴⁰ The percentage was no doubt similarly low in other coffee countries. The Gini index should include the entire rural population, not just landowners.⁴¹

2.

However, access to land was not the key ingredient for success. Because of the large frontier areas in many of the coffee economies in their early stages, land was ample. But working capital and labor were scarce. Although *minifundistas* required virtually no capital to produce coffee and could use family labor, larger-scale farmers and planters did need credit to pay for tools, machinery, workers, and transportation.⁴² Stanley Stein, Warren Dean, and Joseph Sweigart have shown that to a considerable extent planters were themselves financiers or dependent upon the credit offered by their *comisárrios*.⁴³ Julie Charlip

37. Charlip, "Cultivating Coffee"; Lauria-Santiago, *Agrarian Republic*; Naro, "Customary Rightholders"; Williams, *States and Social Evolution*; Lowell Gudmundson, "Peasant, Farmer, Proletarian: Class Formation in a Smallholder Coffee Economy, 1850–1950," *HAHR* 69 (1989): 221–58; Heraldo Lima, *Café e indústria*; and Fernando Picó, *Amargo café* (Rio Piedras: Ediciones Huracán, 1981).

38. Elizabeth Dore, "La producción cafetalera nicaragüense, 1860–1960," in Pérez Brignoli and Samper K., *Tierra, café y sociedad*, 404.

39. Samper K., "In Difficult Times," 173–76.

40. Idem, "El significado social," 139, 170.

41. For the recent debate concerning the agrarian situation in El Salvador, see Martin Diskin, "Distilled Conclusions: The Disappearance of the Agrarian Question in El Salvador"; Jeffrey M. Paige, "Land Reform and Agrarian Revolution in El Salvador: Comment on Seligson and Diskin," and Mitchell Seligson, "Agrarian Inequality and the Theory of Peasant Rebellion," in *Latin American Research Review*, 31, no. 2 (1996).

42. I am grateful to William Gervase Clarence-Smith for this point.

finds that easy access to land in Nicaragua meant that the principal conflict was not over land, but over capital.⁴⁴ In Costa Rica, the small group of *beneficio* owners, who served as industrialists, bankers, and exporters, directed and profited from the coffee economy far more than did growers. This was also true in much of Colombia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Veracruz, Mexico. However in Antioquia, Colombia, small-scale farmers developed a portable and inexpensive mill (*despulpadora*) that allowed them to process on their own farms, reducing the power of *beneficios*, but increasing the power of merchants who served as middle men for the processed beans. It is not surprising, therefore, that merchants began many of the *fincas* of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Chiapas.

That merchants played a central role in the coffee economies does not mean that foreigners dominated and directed the local economies. Recent studies are little concerned with the nationality of merchants and planters. Concentrating on the internal, and especially on production, exporters and bankers are considered exogenous to the primary concerns. It is true that many of the merchants and *beneficio* operators were of foreign birth. However many and probably most of them worked with capital accumulated within Latin America. They were more immigrants than foreign investors and in many cases they were integrated into the national elite.

Certainly, most coffee growers should not be considered a rural elite in the dualistic sense of Barrington Moore's definition that counterpoises agriculturalists to an urban bourgeoisie.⁴⁵ Although Evelyne Huber argues that Moore's model works for Latin America, both Lowell Gudmundson and Frank Safford, who studied coffee growing countries, reject the notion of export agriculture leading to *latifundia*, an agrarian ruling class, and an authoritarian regime. Coffee planters' attachment to the land did not make them less bourgeois nor less prone to democracy than the European bourgeoisie who modernizationists and Marxists alike wanted them to emulate: recent studies

43. Dean, *Rio Claro*; Stein, *Vassouras*; and Joseph Sweigart, *Coffee Factorage and the Emergence of a Brazilian Capital Market* (New York: Garland, 1987).

44. Charlip, "At Their Own Risk," 116–18.

45. Barrington Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon, 1966); Michael Jiménez, "At the Banquet of Civilization: The Limits of Planter Hegemony in Early Twentieth-Century Colombia," in Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Samper K., *Coffee, Society, and Power*, 262–94; and Daniela Spenser, "Soconusco: The Formation of a Coffee Economy in Chiapas," in *Other Mexicos*, ed. Thomas Benjamin and William McNellie (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1984), 123–43.

by David Blackbourn and Geof Eley, Francois Furet, and Theodore Koditschek have demonstrated the interchangeable nature of the agricultural and commercial classes in England, France, and Germany.⁴⁶

3.

It follows from the complicated relations of capital and the variable scale of production, that demesne production was often not the major form. This was true even where large holdings were the rule. Jiménez demonstrates that in Cundinamarca, Colombia service tenancy predominated because latifundistas were unable to subject labor to centralized control.⁴⁷ Brazil's colono system evinced the same fragmentation and subsistence orientation as Holloway and Stolcke have shown. Indeed, I have argued that in many ways the large-scale plantation agriculture of São Paulo resembled Colombian small holder production because of decentralization.⁴⁸

Nor was coffee monocultural in most areas since peasant self-provisioning was an important means of keeping down the coffee wage bill. I estimated that on São Paulo fazendas colonos earned as much as 80 percent of their income in growing food and raising livestock other than coffee. In a different twist, Wade Kit finds in his study of the fincas that the German Dieseldorff family established in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, that in the 1920s over 95 percent of the land was not dedicated to coffee. The resident Kekchí Maya workers used far more of the fincas for milpa and occasionally to grow their own coffee.⁴⁹ In

46. Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens, "Conclusion: Agrarian Structure and Political Power in Comparative Perspective," 183–232; Frank Safford, "Agrarian Systems and the States: The Case of Columbia," 111–150; and Lowell Gudmundson, "Lord and Peasant in the Making of Modern Central America," 151–176, all in *Agrarian Structure and Political Power; Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America*, ed. Evelyne Huber and Frank Safford (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); David Blackbourn and Geof Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984); Francois Furet, *Penser la révolution française* (Paris: Gallemard, 1978); Theodore Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-Industrial Society: Bradford, 1750–1850* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990); and Arnold Bauer, "Industry and the Missing Bourgeoisie," *HAHR* 70 (1990): 227–55.

47. Michael Jiménez, "Traveling Far in Grandfather's Car," *HAHR* 69 (1989): 185–220.

48. Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land*; Stolcke, *Coffee Planters, Workers, and Wives*; and Topik, "Representações nacionais do cafeicultor," 157–72.

49. Topik, "Coffee," in Topik and Wells, *Second Conquest of Latin America*; and Wade A. Kit, "Religión kekchí y producción agrícola en la Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, 1900–1930" (paper presented at the Tercer Congreso de Historia Centroamericana, San José, Costa Rica, July 1996).

El Salvador, usually considered the country most dominated by coffee, Aldo Lauria-Santiago found that as late as 1920 only 60 thousand hectares were used for coffee cultivation, and “large sectors of the population were at first unaffected by the expanding coffee economy.”⁵⁰

Coffee not only coexisted with other crops but in some cases, as with bananas and rubber trees used for shade, there was a symbiotic relationship between them. Indeed, Mario Samper has made the insightful observation that “one obvious limitation of a commodity-oriented approach, focusing on coffee, is that it tends to obscure the interactions with other commercial or subsistence crops which are often quite important for farmers.” He recommends thinking of a coffee complex, rather than just coffee alone.⁵¹

4.

The fragmented and diversified nature of production meant that there were no economies of scale in production of coffee before the Green Revolution.⁵²

50. Lauria-Santiago, *Agrarian Republic*, 229.

51. Mario Samper K., “The Historical Construction of Quality and Competitiveness: A Preliminary Discussion of Coffee Commodity Chains” (paper presented at the conference on Coffee Production and Economic Development, 1700–1960, St. Antony’s, College, Oxford, Sept. 1998). Marco Palacios noted in 1979 that coffee was not monocultural. See Marco Palacios, *El café en Colombia, 1850–1970* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1979), 93.

52. Studies of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization after World War II found no relationship between degree of coffee productivity and size of farm in Brazil; see Verena Stolcke, *Cafecultura: Homens, mulheres e capital (1850–1980)*, trans. Denise Bottmann and João Martins Filho (São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1986), 189. Margarita Nolasco makes a similar conclusion concerning Mexico. See Margarita Nolasco, *Café y sociedad en México* (Mexico City: Centro de Ecodesarrollo, 1985), 42. This, of course, refers to caficultura before the Green Revolution. Today there are returns to scale, and in 1985 holdings of over 50 hectares earned 30 percent more per hectare than plots that were smaller than 10 hectares. See Céline Broggio, Martine Droulers, and Pernet Grandjean, “Les nouveaux enjeux du développement de la caféiculture brésilienne: le cas du Minas Gerais,” in *Geodoc, documents de recherche de l’ufer géographie et aménagement* (Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1997), 18.

The Green Revolution began at different times in different countries. In Costa Rica in the 1950s, El Salvador, Brazil, and Colombia in the 1970s, and much later in Honduras and Nicaragua. Three studies describe the change in Costa Rica: James K. Boyce et al., *Café y desarrollo sostenible: del cultivo agroquímico a la producción orgánica en Costa Rica* (Heredia, Costa Rica: Editorial Fundacion de la Universidad Nacional [hereafter EFUNA], 1994); Paul Sfez, “Estudio diacrónico y sincrónico de los sistemas de cultivo del café en Costa Rica” (paper presented at the Tercer Congreso Centroamericano de História, San

Indeed, small-scale producers often returned higher yields per hectare than did latifundistas and even per unit of capital invested, though few growers actually calculated these things. Economies of scale showed up in transport when railroads or canals brought cherries from far-off fields to the beneficio and to market. Economies were more evident in processing, but even there capital was probably more important than technology for increasing profit levels since processors operated more as bankers and exporters than industrialists, asserting their local monopsonic power rather than profiting from high productivity.

Although coffee was one of the few major crops in which Latin Americans dictated the state of the art in production, with the highest quality beans, highest yields per hectare, and over three-quarters of the world's production (aside from Argentina, Cuba, and Uruguay, Latin Americans could not easily compete internationally in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in other major crops such as corn, sugar, and wheat); this, however, was more because of the natural fertility of the soil and super-exploitation of self-provisioning peasants than because of a modern agro-agricultural mentality and technology. Paulistas, considered the most advanced coffee growers in the world, distressed the Prussian agronomist, Franz Dafert, who came to São Paulo to increase productivity: "accustomed to the easy and unworried life of the rich domain of torrid lands, they have not the least idea of the hard work of the great European crops."⁵³ In Nicaragua, Julie Charlip found that larger growers were more likely to go bankrupt than smaller ones. Cóncavo, an unusually sophisticated and productive finca in Costa Rica studied by Carolyn Hall, was exceptional in its agro-industrial logic. But despite the investment of capital and study it did not enjoy great success.⁵⁴ Warren Dean notes that the productive system of Paulista coffee "lacked the capacity to experiment and incorporate new techniques. "The miraculous expansion of Paulista coffee seems to have depended almost entirely on natural comparative advantage and very little on the skill of

José, Costa Rica, July 1996); and Wim Pelulpey, *El mercado mundial del café* (San José: DEI, 1993). For testimonies from farmers about the effects of the Green Revolution, see Brunilda Hilje, Carlos Naranjo, and Mario Samper, eds., '*Entonces ya vinieron otras variedades, otros sistemas*' . . . *Testimonios sobre la caficultura en el valle central de Costa Rica* (San José: ICAFE; UNA, 1995).

53. Dafert, *Principes de culture rationnelle*, 41. Also see Jacobo Gorender, *A burguesia brasileira* (São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1981); and Topik, "Representações nacionais do cafeicultor?"

54. Carolyn Hall, *Formación de una hacienda cafetalera, 1889-1911* (San José: Ed. Universidad de Costa Rica, 1978).

planters.”⁵⁵ Where large scale production predominated, political power and access to credit were much more powerful explanations than superior coffee growing techniques. Where production scale tended to be smaller, however, quality control of picking, sorting, and processing was more important in increasing returns than technological innovations.⁵⁶

5.

In some coffee lands, exporters and growers alike were progressive in the sense that they pushed for land registrations, banks, and transport in order to protect property rights and to institutionalize the economy. The rise of coffee exports correlates quite closely with the opening of banks and building of railroads in many places.⁵⁷ However in Brazil, which produced the great majority of Latin America’s coffee, exporters were not concerned with rural property rights, mortgage registries, foreclosure laws, and wage labor. Fazendeiros fought against institutionalization of rural rights because legal rights could limit planters’ arbitrary private power even though they were interested in banks and transport. At the same time, fazendeiros exploited and ultimately destroyed banks and the stock market in an enormous speculative scandal in the 1890s. Merchants, who primarily concerned themselves with conditions in the ports, were the principal purveyors of bourgeois property rights, weights, and measures.⁵⁸

In areas of more marginal production, however, land rights often became institutionalized as in Rio de Janeiro state after emancipation, in Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Even very small land sales and loans were registered.⁵⁹ In a twist on

55. Warren Dean, “The Green Wave of Coffee: The Beginnings of Tropical Agricultural Research in Brazil (1885–1900),” *HAHR* 69 (1989): 114–15.

56. I would like to thank Lowell Gudmundson and Mario Samper for this keen observation.

57. Héctor Lindo-Fuentes and Lowell Gudmundson chart this graphically in their book. See Héctor Lindo-Fuentes and Lowell Gudmundson, eds., *Central America, 1821–1871: Liberalism before Liberal Reform* (Tuscaloosa: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1995), 47; and Williams, *States and Social Evolution*, 193.

58. See Eugene Ridings, *Business Interest Groups in Nineteenth-Century Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994); and Steven C. Topik, “Brazil’s Bourgeois Revolution?” *The Americas* XLVIII, no. 2 (1991): 245–71.

59. Mattos de Castro, *Ao sul da história*; Charlip, “Cultivating Coffee”; and Samper K., *Generations of Settlers*. See also Geraldina Portillo, “La tenencia de la tierra en el Departamento de La Libertad, 1897–1901” (paper presented at the Tercer Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, San José, Costa Rica, July 1996); and Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, “La colonización del Volcán de San Vicente, El Salvador, 1860–1900” (paper

conventional wisdom, in many areas peasants and their commercial creditors may well have been more responsible for the institutionalization of capitalist land rights than large-scale landowners. Many smallholders sought titles to communal or ejido lands. However, even in these cases, despite their titles, the political power of latifundistas allowed them to dispossess smallholders.⁶⁰

6.

The extent to which coffee planters brought political peace and created coffee republics is certainly open to question. While Luís Eduardo Nieto Arteta believed that coffee planters brought “peace and tranquility” to Colombia, Jaime Wheelock argued that coffee led to the Liberals’ political consolidation in Nicaragua, and Charles Bergquist has pointed out the role of coffee in sparking Colombia’s War of a Thousand Days.⁶¹ Robert Williams sees coffee leading to state building in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica but at varying paces and not without considerable social costs.⁶²

Even once the caudillo-led revolts ended, coffee growers proved quite divided among themselves. In part, their different scale of production and relations to the means of production dictated this; but they were also divided because they competed for labor and capital. National planters’ organizations developed in most countries only after World War I. Planters were also divided by political allegiances since exporting did not necessarily lead to a liberal world view. Many were conservatives as well as liberals, not only in Brazil and Colombia but also in Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Costa Rica.⁶³

presented at the Tercer Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, San José, Costa Rica, July 1996). But institutionalization was not always the case in the periphery. Few Colombian frontier growers had their land titles legalized as shown by Catherine LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest in Colombia, 1830–1936* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1986).

60. LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest*, 167–70; and Lauria-Santiago, *Agrarian Republic*, 230–33. Williams, *States and Social Evolution*, 237 notes “If a single economic transformation was associated with the development of the coffee economy it was toward privately titled properties with much more clearly delineated boundaries than was true before coffee’s introduction.”

61. Bergquist, *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia*; Nieto Arteta, *El café en la sociedad colombiana* (Bogotá: Ediciones La Sogar al Cuello, 1971), 55; and Jaime Wheelock, *Imperialismo y dictadura* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1975), 15, 105.

62. Williams, *States and Social Evolution*, 235.

63. *Ibid.*; Gudmundson and Lindo-Fuentes, *Central America*; Gudmundson, *Costa Rica before Coffee*; Lindo-Fuentes *Weak Foundations: The Economy of El Salvador in the*

The extent of planter rule has also been brought into question. Certainly coffee planters in Veracruz, Mexico did not even control their own state government, much less the national government. According to Jiménez, Colombia “was hardly a planters’ republic”; however, Robert Bates and Rosemary Thorpe have argued for a strong role for Colombian coffee growers.⁶⁴ Although Love argues that fazendeiros ruled São Paulo and to a lesser extent Brazil, Topik and Fritsch note the limits of coffee planter rule on the national level and Font argues that even in São Paulo smaller subsistence growers held a good deal of political power which Perissinotto also convincingly demonstrates.⁶⁵ Indeed, Robert Bates in his comparison of coffee policy in Brazil and Colombia argues that the difference was that “Brazilian politics was not captive” of the coffee planters while in Colombia the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros that made coffee policy was beholden to planters.⁶⁶ In Costa Rica, Samper points out that beneficio owners, not coffee growers, controlled the state through their “triple monopoly” of credit, processing, and marketing.

Nineteenth Century; Dore, “La Producción cafetalera nicaragüense,” 389–395; Ralph Lee Woodward Jr., *Rafael Carrera and the Emergence of the Republic of Guatemala* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1993); José Murilo de Carvalho, *Teatro de sombras* (São Paulo: Vertice, 1988); Jeffrey M. Paige, “Coffee and Power in El Salvador,” *Latin American Research Review* 28, no. 3 (1993): 7–40; and Frank Safford, “Agrarian Systems and the State: The Case of Colombia,” in Huber and Safford, *Agrarian Structure and Political Power*, 111–49.

64. Jiménez, “At the Banquet of Civilization,” 263. According to Robert H. Bates, coffee planters were powerful, but the “power of the growers, we argued, derived not from their power as an interest group but from their strategic location in the electoral system.” See Robert H. Bates, *Open-Economy Politics: The Political Economy of the World Coffee Trade* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), 97; and Rosemary Thorp, “Export Economy Structures and Subsequent Economic Management,” in *Business and the State in Developing Countries*, ed. Sylvia Maxfield and Ben Ross Schneider (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997). For divisions in Mexico see Heather Fowler Salamini, *Agrarian Radicalism in Veracruz, 1920–1938* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1978); Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land, A Poor People* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1989); and Robert Wasserstrom, *Class and Society in Central Chiapas* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983).

65. Joseph Love, *São Paulo in the Brazilian Federation, 1889–1937* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1980); Topik, *Political Economy of the Brazilian State*; Winston Fritsch, *External Constraints on Economic Policy* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1988); Mauricio Font, “Coffee Planters, Politics and Development in Brazil,” *Latin American Research Review* 22, no. 3 (1987): 69–90; and idem, *Coffee, Contention and Change in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990).

66. Bates, *Open-Economy Politics*, 12, 61–64.

state.⁶⁷ In Nicaragua, political power remained fragmented. The Salvadorean coffee elite refrained from politics, leaving that to the military and their civilian allies.⁶⁸ Even in Chiapas, Mexico the coffee planters, many of whom were of German origin, did not dominate political power. Rather, Jan Rus notes that the highland hacendados who grew corn, wheat, and sugar and raised cattle continued to rule the state.⁶⁹

The weakness of planter power meant that the coffee republics had limited capacity and penetration, particularly during the early years of the export boom. In Central America municipal governments and ejidos rather than the national governments were initially the most important institutions. In the countryside, private power ruled for the most part. The nation-state's largest role was not in distributing land to large-scale finqueros nor directly providing labor but rather providing the troops and police to prevent organized peasant opposition to private appropriation.

Nonetheless, the coffee states played an important direct role in the accumulation process in the cities. Mostly they oversaw the international link by borrowing money abroad, attempting to maintain the value of currency, and promoting transportation improvements. In Brazil, while remaining true to liberalism in word, the state intervened to a considerable degree, going so far as to take control of the international market for coffee. Indeed, the British economist J.W.F. Rowe noted that "Brazilian coffee has been subjected to artificial control of a more thorough, prolonged and deliberate character than any raw material of major importance."⁷⁰ Other states, together with planter organizations, also came to play a fundamental role in marketing, though the extent to which this was public is open to debate. Samper refers to El Salvador's Asociación Cafetalera as "un Estado privado dentro de un Estado no muy público."⁷¹ The same was often true for Colombia's Fed-

67. Samper K., "El significado social," 128.

68. Lauria-Santiago, *Agrarian Republic*, 234.

69. Jan Rus, "Coffee and the Recolonization of Highland Chiapas, Mexico" (paper presented at the conference on Coffee Production and Economic Development, Oxford, 1998).

70. J.W.F. Rowe, *Studies in the Artificial Control of Raw Material Supplies: Brazilian Coffee* (London: London & Cambridge Economic Service, 1932), 5; Topik, *Political Economy of the Brazilian State*. For comparisons on the Brazilian state's role in the coffee industry with the Mexican government's role in henequen production, see Steven C. Topik, "L'Etat sur le marché: approche comparative du café brésilien et du henequen mexicain," *Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 46, no. 2 (1991): 429–58; and Love and Jacobsen, *Guiding the Invisible Hand*.

71. Samper K., "El significado social," 212.

eración de Cafeteros which Bates notes became in the 1940s “a branch of the Colombian government.”⁷² Coffee did not necessarily create either an instrumental or an autonomous state. Indeed, even within the same country the export elite’s control of the state and the state’s participation in the coffee sector varied over time. But it was always true that politics was an important component of the economic formula for success. Economics and politics inter-penetrated.

7.

Part of the reason for the state’s limited reach in the coffee fields of Latin America is that coffee was a frontier crop. Yet, that does not necessarily mean that no one lived beyond the socially defined frontier. In many areas with dense precolombian populations such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Honduras coffee intruded on existing populations and farm-lands. In some cases the native peoples were displaced and in others subsumed in the coffee economy.⁷³ As a mountainous crop, coffee favored the same lands that colonial regimes had left to indigenous peoples. As William Roseberry eloquently notes: “Despite the frontier character of much of coffee expansion, however, most of the ‘wilderness’ into which coffee farmers moved was already encumbered by people, overlapping and competing claims to land, conceptions of space, time, and justice—in short, ‘history’ . . . and these encumbrances shaped their respective coffee economies even as the regions were transformed by the move toward coffee.”⁷⁴ And even where few humans resided on the frontier, institutionalized frontier democracy rarely developed.⁷⁵ Moreover, as Warren Dean has recently and eloquently chronicled, there were enormous opportunity costs. The Atlantic forest was cut down and the once

72. Thorp, “Export Economy Structures”; and Bates, *Open-Economy Politics*, 89.

73. J.C. Cambranes, *Coffee and Peasants in Guatemala: The Origins of the Modern Plantation Economy in Guatemala 1853–1897* (Stockholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1985), 61–84; Jeffrey Gould, “El café, el trabajo, y la comunidad indígena de Matagalpa, 1880–1925,” in Pérez Brignoli and Samper K., *Tierra, café y sociedad*, 279–376; Lindo-Fuentes, *Weak Foundations*, 88–93; Lauria-Santiago, *Agrarian Republic*; and Wasserstrom, *Class and Society*, 107–70.

74. William Roseberry, “La Falta de Brazos: Land and Labor in the Coffee Economies of Nineteenth-Century Latin America,” *Theory and Society* 20, no. 3 (1991): 359.

75. LeGrand, *Frontier Expansion and Peasant Protest*, 87–89.

fertile land denuded.⁷⁶ Not only was this a botanical tragedy but an economic one as well. No one ever calculated the depreciation or replacement costs of the forest and soil which proved to be difficult to renew. This was the crudest form of primitive accumulation. Brazilian fazendeiros, rather than building for tomorrow, were splurging on their children's inheritance. However, Dean's is a lone voice in the forest. Historical coffee studies continue to be anthropocentric with little concern for coffee's ecological consequences though students of present day *caficultura* are very sensitive to environmental issues such as the shrinking of the rain forest.

8.

The indigenous peoples on the "frontiers" have received considerably more attention of late. Carol Smith's fine essays and the other articles in her edited volume develop the role of the Maya in Guatemalan coffee and their resistance. David McCreery also gives a nuanced and detailed treatment of Guatemalan Maya, while Jeffrey Gould, Héctor Pérez Brignoli, Aldo Lauria-Santiago, and Elizabeth Dore look at the ethnic question in Nicaragua and El Salvador.⁷⁷ For the more recent period, John Watanabe, George Collier, and Jan Rus examine Maya coffee farmers and laborers in western Guatemala and Chiapas.⁷⁸ In all of these studies Indians are consciously removed from the

76. Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*, passim.

77. Carol Smith, ed., *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540–1988* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1990); David McCreery, *Rural Guatemala, 1760–1940* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994); idem, "El impacto del café en las tierras de las comunidades indígenas, Guatemala, 1870–1930," in Pérez Brignoli and Samper K., *Tierra, café y sociedad*, 227–78; Gould, "El café, el trabajo," 279–376; idem, "'Vana Ilusión': The Highlands Indians and the Myth of Nicaragua Mestiza, 1880–1925," in Chomsky and Lauria-Santiago, *Identity and Struggle*, 52–93; and Gould, *To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880–1965* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1998); Héctor Pérez Brignoli, "Indians, Communists, and Peasants: The 1932 Rebellion in El Salvador," in Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Samper K., *Coffee, Society, and Power*, 232–61; Elizabeth Dore, "Property, Households, and Public Regulation of Domestic Life, Diriomo, Nicaragua, 1840–1900," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 29, no. 3 (1997): 591–611; Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, "Land, Community, and Revolt in Nineteenth Century Indian Izalco, El Salvador," *HAHR* 79 (1999): 495–534; idem, "'That a Poor Man Be Industrious': Coffee, Community, and Agrarian Capitalism in the Transformation of El Salvador's Ladino Peasantry, 1850–1900," in Chomsky and Lauria-Santiago, *Identity and Struggle*, 25–51.

78. George Collier with Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello, *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas* (Oakland: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1994); Jan Rus,

exotic to become a special sort of peasant. Ethnic definitions and identities are rightly seen as socially and historically constructed rather than biologically determined. The Indians are able members of the modern world who resist and construct within their limited resources; they are not dragging their feet to remain “traditional” or some sort of essentialized “Indian.” Yet they have had values and practices that differentiated them from the rural peasantry or proletariat. They were able to maintain their culture even as they worked the *cafetales*. Indeed, the term often used is “semi-proletariat” since they retained access to their own plots of land in their communities or even, as Kit has shown, maintained their communal land within the finca. They were able to maintain their identities even in the face of internal fissures in their communities, planter attempts to push them off their land and government efforts to erase them as a census category. In more recent years, the Maya as well as other indigenous peoples have begun to construct wider ethnic nationalisms and even an overarching pan-Indian movement.⁷⁹

Some recent studies have begun also to look more closely at gender in the coffee fields and find, not surprisingly, that women played central roles. Path-breaking work by Francie Chassen López and Heather Fowler-Salamini for the states of Oaxaca and Veracruz find women, particularly widows, often owning and working land. The breakup of communal lands and the creation of fincas expanded this phenomenon. In more peripheral or less traditional areas, that is, the most economically dynamic areas, it seems that women were more able to assert their independence in their communities and in the courts. This was also true in coffee growing areas. According to imperfect Mexican data, in 1910 one-third of all Veracruz’s coffee farmers and one-fourth of its agrarian laborers were women. Geraldina Portillo warns us, however, that sometimes women had more success acquiring property in the division of communal and national lands than holding on to it.⁸⁰ Stolcke adds that even when women did

“Local Adaption to Global Change: The Reordering of Native Society in Highland Chiapas, Mexico, 1974–1994,” *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 58 (1995): 71–89; and John M. Watanabe, *Maya Saints and Souls in a Changing World* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1992).

79. “Ethnicity and Class in Latin America,” *Latin American Perspectives* 89 23:2 (1996). Also see Michael Kearney, *Reconceptualizing the Peasantry* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

80. Francie R. Chassen-López, “‘Cheaper Than Machines’: Women and Agriculture in Porfirian Oaxaca, 1880–1911”; and Heather Fowler-Salamini, “Gender, Work, and Coffee in Cordoba, Veracruz, 1850–1910,” both in *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850–1990* (Tucson: Univ. of Arizona Press, 1994), 27–50 and 51–73; Portillo, “La tenencia de la tierra.”

not directly work in agriculture, their unpaid role in self-provisioning and social reproduction allowed coffee remuneration for their male relatives to be sufficiently low that coffee was profitable even with primitive techniques.⁸¹ She also stresses “family morality” which was as important perhaps as economic calculations in determining female availability for labor. Elizabeth Dore adds the important insight that morality was a changeable concept. The struggle for land incited by the expansion of Nicaragua’s coffee economy led to a transformation of rural tenure and the role of women in it. The local state began playing a much larger role in adjudicating issues of family morality.⁸² Patricia Arias even establishes a helpful typology of Indian, peasant, and ranchero family morality with considerably different labor practices but does not relate the categories to specific commodities.⁸³

Women also played an important part in the coffee economy independent from their family role. Although in Chiapas it seems that long-distance migrant workers were mostly men and in Veracruz whole families migrated, Lauria-Santiago has found thousands of Guatemalan women migrating to the coffee fields of Santa Ana, El Salvador, apparently without their families.⁸⁴

Single women also predominated in the processing plants which were some of the largest factories of the time and even conducted the first female-led strike in the history of the Guatemalan workers’ movement. These plants were important in the early stages of industrialization. In Medellín, coffee processing plants employed one third of the city’s industrial workers in 1923 and in Cali the seven processing plants employed 41 percent of the city’s industrial work force in 1925.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, there is still very much we

81. Stolcke, “Labors of Coffee,” 65–94.

82. Dore, “Property, Households and Public Regulation.” This is the opposite of the effect of growing market relations found in eighteenth-century Mexico and British North America where the courts receded from issues of family morality. See Patricia Seed, *To Honor and Obey* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1988); and Cornelia Dayton, *Women before the Bar* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995).

83. Patricia Arias, in *Women of the Mexican Countryside*; and Topik’s review, “Culture, Economy and Coffee,” *Latin American Research Review* 32, no. 1 (1996): 124–38.

84. Lauria-Santiago, *Agrarian Republic*, 153–54.

85. Ana Lorena Carrillo Padilla, “Sufridas hijas del pueblo: la huelga de las escogedores de café de 1925 en Guatemala y Centroamérica,” *Mesoamerica* 15, no. 27 (1994): 157–73; and José Antonio Ocampo and María Mercedes Botero, “El Café y los orígenes del desarrollo económico moderno en Colombia” (paper presented at the Latin American Export Economies Workshop, Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, Dec. 1996).

don't know about the processing plants because they have been so little studied. It is certain, however, that one cannot lump together all workers by ignoring class, race, gender, and family structure.

9.

These divisions inform and complicate new studies of coffee labor, giving faces to workers. The extent to which the coffee revolution can be viewed as a progressive force depends in good part on the consequences for coffee workers. Did the coffee economies, however forcibly, make peasants into modern rural proletarians so they could take part in the national market and the nation? Certainly peasants were often coerced into working in coffee fields. The distinction should be made, however, between extra-economic coercion in which laborers were pressed into work by the threat of public or private force and bourgeois economic coercion in which workers volunteered to labor for another either because of a loss of self-sufficiency (loss of land or manufactured need for money) or desire for more consumer goods. The general view has been that the former was bad because it was a retrograde form and impinged on worker liberty while the latter was better because it represented a vital step on the sometimes painful road to capitalist development.

It is quite clear that extra-economic coercion existed, certainly under Brazilian slavery and in a perhaps less harsh form through state impositions of vagrancy, *mandamiento*, and debt peonage laws in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Soconusco, Mexico. Yet the meaning of coercion has been turned on its head recently. David McCreery has forcefully argued that extra-economic coercion was a sign of the vitality of Mayan indigenous communities since they were adequately self-sufficient to not need work on fincas. A similar situation seems to have existed in Soconusco, where planters were forced by recalcitrant Mayas and other indigenous peoples to advance payments to induce them to migrate seasonally for the harvest. In Verapaz, Guatemala, however, Kit shows that the Kekchí may have resided full time on finca land, acknowledged the finquero's authority and contracted debts yet they maintained the essence of their culture almost unchanged. Indeed by recognizing the authority of the Kekchí notables, the finquero probably strengthened the indigenous community. The move to a wage labor system, rather than a sign of increasing rural justice, marked the triumph of planters over overpopulated and land-scarce Maya. There is no reason to believe that the Maya fared any better under wages than under earlier systems nor that capitalist wage-paying bosses in El

Salvador treated their workers better than “coercive” Guatemalan or Soconusco finqueros.⁸⁶

In Brazil, even under slavery, chattel workers are often viewed as “proto-peasants” with access to traditional rights and bargaining power, and the ability to accumulate money, sometimes to purchase their own freedom. That planters used many methods besides brute force to coax labor out of slaves is evidenced by the fact that the abolition of slavery brought a variety of forms such as the *colonato*, sharecropping and renting, but very little extra-economic coercion.⁸⁷

These labor systems, which existed throughout the coffee belt, represented an intermediary labor form between coercion and wage labor. In fact, most coffee workers before 1930 fell into this middle ground in which they were by turns (or even simultaneously) smallholders, renters, or tenants as well as *jornaleros*. They filled numerous niches and received much of their compensation in non-monetary forms such as usufruct. Many of the workers were migratory, with the Maya of Guatemala and Chiapas apparently the most

86. Friederike Bauman, “Terratenientes, campesinos y la expansión de la agricultura capitalista en Chiapas, 1896–1916,” *Mesoamérica* 4, no. 5 (1983): 8–63; Jeffrey Gould finds coercion in Nicaragua but also substantial resistance. See Gould, “El café, el trabajo”; and Karl Kraeger, *Landwirtschaft und Kolonisation im Spanischen Amerika* Band, 2: *Die Sudamerikanischen Weststaaten und Mexiko* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1901). Jan Rus paints a darker picture of debt peonage before and immediately after the revolution, but carries the story forward to the 1970s, showing that after a coffee pickers’ union was established in 1937, conditions improved noticeably. See Jan Rus, “The ‘Comunidad Revolucionaria Institucional’: *The Subversion of Native Government in Highland Chiapas, 1936–1968*,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1994), 268–69; and David McCreery, “Wage Labor, Free Labor and Vagrancy Laws: The Transition to Capitalism in Guatemala, 1920–1954,” in Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Samper K., *Coffee, Society and Power*, 206–31. This fits in with broader reinterpretations of debt peonage by Arnold Bauer, “Rural workers in Spanish America,” *HAHR* 59 (1979): 34–63; and Alan Knight, “Mexican Peonage: What Was It and Why Was It,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 18 (1986): 41–74.

87. On slavery, see Gorender, *O escravismo colonial*; Stuart B. Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1992); Mark Thurner, ed., *From Chattel Slaves to Wage Slaves: The Dynamics of Labor Bargaining in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1995); and Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crown of Glory: The Desmarara Slave Revolt*; Ciro Cardoso, *Escravo o campones? o proto campeonato negro nas America* (São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1987); George Reid Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo Brazil, 1888–1988* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Mattos de Castro, *Ao sul da historia*; Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land*; Stolcke, *Coffee Planters, Workers, and Wives*; and Naro, *A Slave’s Place*.

ambulatory.⁸⁸ But as Bauer points out, remuneration in the form of access to land or rations rather than cash, however detrimental to the “development of an internal market for local products, does not alter the market function.”⁸⁹ This should probably not be considered a peasant mode of production. As McCreery notes: “the peasant is part of a larger social, economic, and political system usually structured to extract rent, labor, and product from him on exploitative terms. It follows that there can be no ‘peasant mode of production.’”⁹⁰

Perhaps because of coffee’s ability to prosper under numerous and varied labor systems, recent studies do not portray a revolutionary cadre in the cafetales. In fact, the stress on varieties of land tenure, labor arrangements, and the importance of ethnicity and gender accent the fissures within the peasantry that impeded joint action. Detailed studies by Gudmundson and Samper suggest that family inheritance strategies muted class antagonisms while privileging males. Samper’s insightful comparison of the political responses of Costa Rica and Colombia to the Depression of the 1930s insists that although both countries had similar coffee systems and faced similar external problems, they “internalized the external” quite differently.⁹¹ Just as peasants enjoyed some agency—which usually has meant the ability to resist the forces of capitalism (but recently has come to mean more their ability to adapt to capitalism)—so were they subject to contingency which means that their political responses could vary widely even in the face of similar circumstances.

Coffee workers do not seem to have been very revolutionary. Chiapas was a late entry into the Mexican Revolution; indeed the revolution came from without. In Veracruz, finca workers do not seem to have been a major constituency of the agraristas. Nicaragua had a socialist revolution because of the

88. For examples see Watanabe, *Maya Saints and Souls*, 142–48; Rigoberta Menchú, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú, testimonio*, with Elizabeth Burgos Debray (Havana: Casa de las Americas, 1983); and Jan Rus, *Abtel ta pinka . . . Trabajo en las fincas, pláticas de los Tzotziles sobre las fincas cafetaleras de Chiapas* (San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas: Taller Tzotzil, Instituto de Asesoría Antropológica Para la Región Maya, Asociación Civil [hereafter INAREMAC], 1990).

89. Arnold Bauer, “Landlord and Campesino in the Chilean Road to Democracy,” in Huber and Safford, *Agrarian Structure and Political Power*, 36.

90. McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 5. For a discussion of the shortcomings of the concept of peasant mode of production see Roseberry, *Coffee and Capitalism*, 192–208. For another fine but more general discussion of the peasantry see Kearney, *Reconceptualizing the Peasantry*.

91. Gudmundson, *Costa Rica before Coffee*; and Samper K., *Generations of Settlers*; also see their articles in Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Samper K., *Coffee, Society, and Power*.

weakness of coffee and the coffee planting class, not because coffee exacerbated social contradictions. In Brazil, São Paulo was one of the most politically conservative states while coffee dominated, even revolting against the populist regime of Getúlio Vargas. The Arbenz revolution in Guatemala issued in the cities and was extended by politicians to the countryside where support was insufficient to sustain the regime, though Cindy Forster has recently argued in her study of San Marcos, Guatemala, that “the revolution in the countryside seized crucial victories from a reluctant state” because they gained wage raises.⁹² Even if we accept Bergquist’s contention that *la violencia* in Colombia centered in the coffee areas which was “caused” by the rural working class, fighting was individualistic, ordered on the lines of the traditional political parties, and ultimately “rendered it [the rural working class] ideologically, organizationally, and politically impotent” while eliminating many smallholders. No doubt the peasant scale of production is closely related to coffee’s conservatism and the reluctance of smallholders and workers to organize along class lines.

The most convincing presentation of the revolutionary force of coffee cultivation has recently been put forth by Jeffrey Paige. He suggests that “in the 1980s Central America found a new route to the transition to democracy —through socialist revolution from below.” However the power of landlords was broken not by an urban bourgeoisie defeating the landed elite since they were “two fractions of the same elite.” Rather actions of the “armed left” brought down the old order. But not in the way that the left intended. “Although the socialist revolutionaries destroyed the old order, and opened the way for democracy, the ironic outcome of their efforts was the triumph of the agro-industrial bourgeoisie and neoliberalism.”⁹³

10.

The relationship of the coffee boom to industrialization, that is, the existence of *desarrollo hacia afuera* has ceased to be an important concern among histori-

92. Cindy Forster, “Campesino Labor Struggles in Guatemala,” in Chomsky and Lauria-Santiago, *Identity and Struggle*, 218; Benjamin, *A Rich Land, A Poor People*; Bergquist, *Labor in Latin America*, 368; Paige, *Coffee and Power*; Jim Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1994); Love, *São Paulo in the Brazilian Federation*; Heather Fowler-Salamini, *Agrarian Radicalism in Veracruz*; and Daniela Spenser, *El Partido Socialista Chiapaneca* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores de Antropología Social [hereafter CIESAS], 1988), 22.

93. Paige, *Coffee and Power*, 358–59.

ans. Economists continue to dabble in the question, however. Victor Bulmer-Thomas concentrates in part on the “commodity lottery” and export-led growth in general with some discussion of coffee.

Although in Brazil a host of works in the 1970s and 1980s took up debates initiated by Warren Dean’s argument on coffee’s contribution to the industrialization of São Paulo, and several major studies examined coffee and industry in Colombia, the turn from development and dependency concerns to peasant studies and mode of production analysis has marginalized the study of industrialization for historians. The move toward neoclassical economics, a presentist orientation, and interest in the role of foreign investment in industrialization has left most economists little interested in the links between coffee and industry. The most thorough recent analysis of Brazilian industrialization, by Wilson Suzigan, gives little attention to the role of coffee.⁹⁴ The emphasis on how capitalism on a world scale created, in Eric Wolf’s words “a complex hierarchical system controlled by the capitalist mode of production, but including a vast array of subsidiary regions that exhibited different combinations of the capitalist mode with other modes” has meant that anything so seemingly teleological or Eurocentric as the drive to industry has been neglected.⁹⁵ This is part of the broader trend of accentuating the differences between social and economic history by concentrating on the former.⁹⁶

94. Bulmer-Thomas, *Economic History of Latin America*; Wilson Suzigan, *Industrial brasileira: origen e desenvolvimento* (São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1986); Rosemary Thorp, *Progress, Poverty and Exclusion: An Economic History of Latin America in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1998); Warren Dean, *The Industrialization of São Paulo* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1969); Joao Manuel Cardoso de Mello, *O capitalismo tardio* (São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1982); Sergio Silva, *Expansão cafeeira e origens da indústria no Brasil* (São Paulo: Ed. Alfa-Omega, 1976); and Wilson Cano, *Raízes da concentração industrial em São Paulo* (Rio de Janeiro: DIFEL, 1977); on Colombia, see Mariano Arango, *Café y industria, 1850–1930* (Bogotá: Valencia Editores, 1981); and William McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia, 1845–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971). For a thoroughly researched and nuanced analysis of coffee’s impact in Central America, see Williams, *States and Social Evolution*. Williams is much more concerned with the social and political consequences of arabica cultivation than with its implications for industrialization.

95. Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982), 296–97; also see McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 3.

96. Even economic historians have been shying away from the question of industrialization and development, preferring to concentrate on the relationship of exports to monetary and fiscal policy. See, for example, Marcelo Abreu and Afonso Bevilacqua,

Some Final Considerations

These thoughtful and sensitive recent studies have allowed a much more realistic and complicated vision of coffee society. They demonstrate national and regional divergences. Yet too often their objective has not much exceeded demonstrating that a general rule does not obtain in a particular circumstance. The pathbreaking essays in *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America*, for example, “concentrate on particular aspects of distinct regional experiences — differences in agrarian structure, the role and fate of small-scale production, class and ethnic relations, state structures, and the like.”⁹⁷

To be sure, coffee production used many different and complex labor and land tenure systems, technologies, credit arrangements, and political regimes. Coffee was not an all powerful master that demanded that its subjects follow a specific lifestyle and mind-set. There is a great effort to show that internal factors were as important if not more important than external ones in the growth of coffee economies and that similar economic impulses could have substantially different political and cultural outcomes while the political and ideological are freed from obedience to economic forces, being themselves transformative. Categories of analysis and relationships between variables are no longer deduced by analogies to received models based on European experience but rather Latin American local history is emphasized. These findings are often made in reaction against grand theories such as dependency and modernization and consciously eschew attempts at creating other models since metanarratives in general are suspect.

This approach to the study of coffee societies is part of a strategy of intellectual resistance against the onslaught of a neoliberalism that wants to objectify people by subjecting them to the demands of global capital. Neoliberalism’s flattening seeks to ignore or homogenize culture, gender, ethnicity, and local variation so that people can be interchangeable workers and consumers who can be “out-sourced” internationally, “relocated,” or electronically integrated. But to counter this trend by simply arguing that things are complicated, ambiguous, or indeterminate is probably not very compelling or useful. I am

“Brazil as an Export Economy, 1880–1930,” (paper presented at the Latin American Export Economy Workshop, Lake Atitlán, Guatemala, Dec. 1996); Edmar Bacha in *150 anos de café*, ed. Edmar Rocha and Robert Greenhill (Rio de Janeiro: Marcellino Martins e E. Johnston, 1992); and E. Cardoso, “Exchange Rates in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: An Econometric Model,” *Journal of Development Studies* 19, no. 2 (1983).

97. Roseberry, “Introduction,” 2. The same tendency is noticeable in Williams’s fine comparative study of Central American coffee economies in *States and Social Evolution*.

reminded of a review Héctor Lindo-Fuentes wrote of *Guiding the Invisible Hand*. The book successfully debunked conventional views of economic liberalism, but Lindo-Fuentes complained that it did not replace those faulty views with any vision that a minister of finance could use. Or, as Garrison Keillor has wryly observed, “you ask them for a vision and they give you dissenting opinions.”⁹⁸

But if our studies of coffee societies seek bounded generalizations, as is increasingly becoming the case, they can help the minister of finance. She becomes aware that one-size-fits-all policies are probably doomed because of the variations of tenancy and labor relations. She would consider consulting the producers, as well as the pickers’ organizations, the processors, and the marketing boards rather than dictating from above. The many players in the economy should not be thought of as monolithic. She should remember that many of the workers are women and their families whose availability is dictated by values in addition to the amount of wages. The same would be true for many of the indigenous farmers and workers. Merchants are faced by competing forces from the international market and the internal market; they are not free to do as they wish. The minister of finance would understand that variation is determined not just by happenstance and contingency; local conditions and experiences affect the forces and consequences of production. Our goal should not be simply to complicate a historical moment but to understand a complicated situation.

Ironically, the drive to stress agency, contingency, and difference comes at precisely the time that the world is the most homogeneous and integrated in history. Chaos theorists explain how a butterfly flapping its wings in China can create a storm in the Americas. Historians stress the local, the individual, free will (agency), and heterogeneity while the world we live in is becoming global, massified, determined, and homogeneous. It is hard to argue against the impact of global forces. Our studies run the risk of being dismissed as nostalgia if we see only resistance and difference.

We need bounded generalizations that are sensitive to variation and avoid essentialized categories. I suggest that the way to start doing this is to do more comparative work, comparisons looking for patterns as well as differences. We will see that many apparent differences might not have felt very different in the lived lives of the participants. For example, the independent campesino in Antioquia might not have had a much different life than the colono on large São Paulo fazendas. The owner of that fazenda probably had a role in the economy similar to the beneficio owner in Costa Rica. Peasant landownership

98. Garrison Keillor, “Talk Radio,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (Oct. 1997), 58.

might not have been so liberating if still subjected to the “triple monopoly” of processors. Indeed, by masking the nature of exploitation, widespread small-holding might have better facilitated concentration of wealth than did latifundia. And the Paulista colono, who could easily leave for another fazenda with richer soil, might have had more security than a small-scale Costa Rican or Nicaraguan land holder. We should recognize that land ownership per se was not the key to one’s role in the coffee economy. Rather, access to land, labor, and capital were fundamental; and many mixed arrangements existed with people filling multiple roles. The apparent differences are more artifacts of categorical straight jacketing rather than real differences in the functioning of the coffee economies. Even apparent political differences, such as Costa Rica’s democracy versus El Salvador’s authoritarian oligarchy diminish upon closer inspection.⁹⁹ We need to be wary of that illness of old age, the hardening of categories while at the same time not lapsing into a nihilistic belief that every case is unique, every time different. Yes, it is important to recreate the lived lives of individual actors in coffee economies and realize that their lives embraced far more than picking arabica cherries. But I think we should also be willing to understand the broader structures that restricted the freedom of action of participants in *caficultura*. As well as appreciating the variety of individual experiences, we should also think statistically. Individual counter-examples do not nullify broad, consistent trends. As the excellent recent studies have shown, we have to start with empirical work based on realistic and historically sensitive categories to inductively create generalizations. But those generalizations allow us to attempt deductive reasoning as well, even though we should not be locked into assuming that what happened in the coffee fields of São Paulo also happened in Antioquia. As importantly, national borders should not be the frontiers of generalizations. Although national governments played increasingly important roles in land, labor, financial, and commodity markets, there was much variation within countries and similarities between countries. Local histories, cultures, and geographies were very important, but so were national states and the world market.

In another vein, we must pay closer attention to the production process itself to understand the social and political meanings of economic data. For example, the more recent decline in scale of holding probably augurs a *greater* concentration of wealth rather than democratization; current *coffea arabica*

99. Pérez Brignoli’s “Crecimiento agroexportador” and Samper’s “El significado social” are two fine examples of seeing the essential coffee forest as well as the diversity among the trees.

varieties require much greater capital since they are planted as much as ten times more densely, demand fertilizer and pesticides, offer little space for other crops, and are employing a true rural proletariat. Hence a rather small finca today is probably much more an agro-industrial enterprise than were the large haciendas at the turn of the century which usually only dedicated a small area to the arabica. Today's coffee workers have far less independence of movement even though aggregate data imply greater rural democratization. The point is that one must understand the production process to understand the significance of data and that that process has changed qualitatively over time. We have to historicize not only the human actors in the drama, but the set and props as well.

It seems to me that in order to examine the internalization of the external we also need to better understand the external. Too often the international price of coffee is considered the only exogenous variable. But the reality is that internal decision-making is also very much constrained by such issues as the international level of transportation, growing, processing, and end-product technology, segmentation of the market, the political organization of world growers (for example, the International Coffee Organization Organization), the oligopsonic power of coffee roasters, and the cost and availability of global capital. Yet the international coffee trade has been little examined by historians. The only recent historic studies of coffee commerce are by Robert Bates, Robert Greenhill, and Mark Pendergast.¹⁰⁰ By understanding the development of the international coffee economy with its increasingly centralized European and U.S. control, the scholar can come to appreciate that what appear as wide differences in local production systems, make little differ-

100. The studies by historians include Robert Greenhill, "E. Johnston: 150 anos em café" in Rocha and Greenhill, *150 años de café*, and "Investment Group, Free-Standing Company or Multinational? Brazilian Warrant, 1909–52," *Business History* 37, no. 1 (1995): 86–111; and Mark Pendergast, *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* (New York: Basic Books, 1999). For a brief overview see Steven C. Topik, "Integration of the World Coffee Market," in *Integration of Commodity Markets in History*, ed. Clara Eugenia Núñez (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, Fundación El Monte, 1998). Most of the studies have been by economists and coffee *aficionados*. See J. de Graff, *The Economics of Coffee* (Wageningen, Netherlands: Pudoc, 1986); C.F. Marshall, *The World Coffee Trade: A Guide to the Production, Trading and Consumption of Coffee* (Cambridge: Woodhead-Faulkner, 1983); Ian Bersten, *Coffee Floats, Tea Sinks: Through History and Technology to a Complete Understanding* (Sydney: Helian Books); and Richard L. Lucier, *The International Political Economy of Coffee: From Juan Valdez to Yank's Diner* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1988). Also see the study by political scientist Robert Bates, *Open-Economy Politics*.

ence to the international masters of the trade. They may be less signs of local autonomy and independence than local irrelevance from a global perspective. So many coffee sources are available that roasters roam the globe choosing whatever is most beneficial to them. My point is that to fully appreciate the local coffee economy we have to understand its function in the global economy as well as its local ramifications. Recent efforts to chart “commodity chains” and their relationship to global capitalism are an important move toward both disaggregating the international economy to study specific commodities while at the same time understanding that commodity’s global “social life” and the part individual producers and workers play in the big picture.¹⁰¹ Shafer’s study of how sectors, among them coffee, shape the developmental prospects of states is also useful historically.¹⁰²

At base, what is needed in order to fully appreciate the importance of the new insights that have been developed recently is to marry social and economic history. By understanding how demography, geography, local history, indigenous peoples, labor systems, gender, cultural understandings, and family morality create a plethora of responses to the same capitalist world economy, we unmask the *homo economicus*, giving him innumerable human faces. Such apparent social questions as ethnic, gender, religious, and family practices should very much be part of economic equations. So should complex labor and land tenure systems. And of course politics cannot be considered exogenous but rather should be recognized as central to determining profit and loss, winners and losers. At the same time, to stand Van Young’s observation on its head, a sensitive, open-minded economics should inform and enrich cultural and social studies.

Of course everyone cannot do everything. The mating of the mole who burrows into one hole and the eagle who glides over the landscape might give birth to a sterile bastard. But if the authors of the rich, innovative, and extremely fruitful social histories of coffee think about the broader economic implications of their local studies, without abandoning their fine-tooth social examinations, they will not only be informed by sophisticated theory and urgent issues, they will muscle their way to the center of the debate that has long been dominated by economists and that very much is shaping our world.

101. See Gary Gereffi and Miguel Korzeniewicz, eds., *Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994); and Arjun Appaduari, ed., *The Social Life of Things, Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986).

102. D. Michael Shafer, *Winners and Losers: How Sectors Shape the Developmental Prospects of States* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1994).