

tional market for coffee combined to undermine the agrarian economy. By the 1940s the district was no longer a significant coffee producer and many peasants had left.

Conceptually, this book revises the idea of a “precipitate peasantry” (agriculturalists called up by market forces) put forward by William Roseberry. Yarrington argues for a “frontier peasantry” that shows greater agency and desire to be a part of capitalist markets than the passive notion of precipitate peasantry allows. In addition, the case is made for the workings of a “moral economy” on the frontier—a concept typically reserved for older settlements. Through cooperative strategies of labor sharing and extended family homesteading, community identity and systems of reciprocity evolved quickly on the frontier. Once land was no longer readily available, the characteristics of precipitate peasantries emerged.

To Yarrington’s credit he consciously links local politics and society to larger national currents, infusing the events in Duaca with greater meaning. Despite efforts by national politicians to erode the authority of local leaders, Duaca’s elites resourcefully worked the system to their short-term advantage. This emphasis on political control seems justified for Duaca, yet other forces were important. Demographic and environmental factors undermined the profitability of coffee on the frontier and require further examination. In particular, it seems that the environmental basis for coffee in Lara was marginal at best. The influence of the international coffee market is even less clear in this study. Production strategies changed dramatically as prices oscillated, and for places like Duaca the 1930s marked the end of coffee dependence.

That said, this book will be a standard for those interested in Venezuela’s political and agrarian history. Its originality will also appeal to students of export-led development and peasant studies. The concept of a frontier peasantry is especially noteworthy. Lastly, the author’s clear and graceful voice is a welcome departure from the jargon-filled tomes that now fill our shelves.

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*Guyana, Fragile Frontier: Loggers, Miners, and Forest Peoples.* By MARCUS COLCHESTER. London: Latin America Bureau; Gloucestershire: World Rainforest Movement; Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers. 1997. Maps. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 172 pp. Paper, \$19.00.

Intoxicating *fabulae* of wealth have lured foreign venturers into northern South America ever since Columbus hailed the continent as an “Earthly Paradise” in 1498. In 1596 Guyana’s reputation was further embellished with the publication of Sir Walter Raleigh’s *Discoverie of the Large, Rich, and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana*. The earliest Europeans into the region were Dutch and Spanish traders, whose export of forest products, including timber, depended upon the knowledge and labor of native Americans.

When plantations of cultivated crops replaced extraction as the basis of commodity export in the mid-seventeenth century, Guyanese commercial activity moved from

the interior to the coast, and the labor supply shifted from Amerindian to imported African slaves. With this turn, and in the context of expanding world markets, both the standing forests of the Guyanese interior and its native American populations were rendered invisible. But beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing into the present, with the steady decline of the coastal plantation economy, the interior has become, once again, the focus of international gaze and locus of aspirations of limitless wealth, now led by multinational lending institutions.

In the 1980s, as remediation for a vast national debt, Guyana opened its borders to foreign investment. Guyana was one of the first nations to receive structural adjustment loans from the World Bank, and its liberalized economy has been regarded by lenders as a model of effective reform. An important component of the structural adjustment program of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund was the promotion of “nontraditional exports,” including gold and timber. (Needless to say, in the case of Guyana no exports could be more traditional.) Much of the investment has been generated outside Guyana, with the Guyanese themselves, Colchester argues, reaping a negligible portion of the wealth derived from the sale of the country’s natural resources. While in 1996 Guyana’s Gross Domestic Product grew a healthy 7.9 percent, the fruits of this additional income have not been equally distributed.

Although Guyana as a whole has been adversely impacted by the results of structural adjustment, the costs have fallen most heavily on the residents of the interior, the Indians. Any short-term benefits to them are as dubious as the economic and social toll is certain. *Guyana, Fragile Frontier* examines the contemporary focus on interior resources that are coveted by multinational enterprises and regarded as potential income sources by development agencies. In particular, the book considers the implications of this focus for Amerindian communities, whose populations constitute the majority in the interior. Their vulnerability to wide-scale timber and mining extraction is a paramount concern and major theme of this book. Guyana’s frontier is one of the world’s last. Unsustainable exploitation of its finite resources would harm the Amerindian population outright, short-change the Guyanese nation as a whole in the long run, and create an irreplaceable loss in the world’s remaining stores of floral, faunal, and ethnic diversity.

Colchester argues that the Guyana of the close of the twentieth century is similar in many ways to that of the end of the sixteenth—both have been characterized by internal colonialism and southward expansion. After tracing Guyanese political economy from trading to plantation, Colchester focuses on what he calls “development domination,” emphasizing the overexploitation of resources, the development of the interior, and the unequal distribution of wealth, all of which imperil the survival of the forests and its 60,000 Amerindian inhabitants.

One of the more interesting points of comparison between the early extractive economy and its modern counterpart is that of the relations among nations. In today’s extractive industry, foreign investment derives largely from companies based in southern, rather than northern, nations. Particularly notable is increasing Malaysian invest-

ment in the Guyanese timber industry and South African involvement in the mining of gold and precious gemstones. The long-term advantages for the Guyanese nation, the supplier of these raw materials, remain questionable.

This was evident during the 1997 Christmas season, when protests resulting from high unemployment closed commerce in the Guyanese capital. The very measures demanded by multilateral lending institutions and enacted to bring about economic stability had resulted in skyrocketing unemployment and widespread political unrest. In the "back-of-the-envelope" calculations by the World Bank in its preliminary 1995 report that assigns a value to a country's natural resources and divides this value by the population figure, Guyana registered a hypothetical annual income of \$90,000 per capita. Yet in 1996 the actual annual per capita income for Guyana was a mere \$560. Colchester's book provides a convincing argument that if Guyana is to experience sustainable prosperity and social equity, important policy measures protecting its social and natural resources must be put in place.

*Guyana, Fragile Frontier* is the fourth book in a series by Colchester, founder and director of the World Rainforest Movement's Forest Peoples Programme, on the political ecology of tropical forest peoples and tropical forest resource exploitation. Two related books in this series are *Forest Politics in Suriname* (Utrecht, 1995) and *The Struggle for Land and the Fate of the Forests* (Penang, Malaysia, 1993), an overview of deforestation edited by Colchester and Larry Lohmann. *Guyana, Fragile Frontier*, the latest in this series, is an important contribution. Colchester brings to the discussion over 20 years of reputable research and publication in the ethnohistory of trade in the Americas. His political ecological perspective combines the insights of anthropology, political economy, and history. The argument is well documented and fills an important gap in the literature on Guyana and on the impact of international trade on the economies, politics, and natural resources of the New World tropics. Like the others in the series, this volume will be of great interest to a variety of audiences. It will be a valuable resource to both scholars of Latin American political economies, as well as to advocates of the rights of indigenous peoples and the preservation of tropical rainforests.

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*The Brazilian Photographs of Genevieve Naylor, 1940–1942.* By ROBERT M. LEVINE. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. Photographs. Map. Notes. x, 155 pp. Cloth, \$59.95. Paper, \$24.95.

At the close of the twentieth century we are sophisticated consumers of visual information, aware of its vulnerability and limitations as documentation. Yet photographic images like those made by Genevieve Naylor in Brazil in the 1940s still convey a sense of the people, place, and times in a way that no other medium can. There is an immediacy and, as Robert M. Levine points out, a wealth of often incidental detail that elicits our empathy and enriches the images as historical documents.