

# CULTURE, ECONOMY, AND COFFEE\*

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- TASTES OF PARADISE: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF SPICES, STIMULANTS, AND INTOXICANTS.* By Wolfgang Schivelbusch, translated by David Jacobson. (New York: Vintage, 1992. Pp. 237. \$25.00 cloth.)
- COFFEE, SOCIETY, AND POWER IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper Kutschbach. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. Pp. 304. \$48.50 cloth, \$15.95 paper.)
- WOMEN OF THE MEXICAN COUNTRYSIDE, 1850–1990.* Edited by Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughn. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994. Pp. 253. \$35.00 cloth, \$15.95 paper.)
- WITH BROADAX AND FIREBRAND: THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BRAZILIAN ATLANTIC FOREST.* By Warren Dean. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995. Pp. 481. \$38.00 cloth.)
- BASTA! LAND AND THE ZAPATISTA REBELLION IN CHIAPAS.* By George Collier, with Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello. (Oakland, Calif.: Food First, 1994. Pp. 178. \$12.95 paper.)

There is a lot of history in that cup of coffee you are sipping. One could add, a lot of anthropology and sociology as well. The story of a bean might at first seem vapid, even ridiculous. But in fact, coffee as a drug, a medicine, a beverage, and a commodity has tied together far-flung peoples for five centuries, attending and even animating the great currents of societies. The five books under review here reveal different layers and various perspectives on human experiences with *coffea arabica*, but they all demonstrate the connectedness and intricacies of human interaction with “nature” and the creation of commodities. Although coffee is a somewhat peripheral concern in some of the studies, the issues they all examine are germane to understanding through the lens of one popular commodity the interplay among production, consumption, the environment, and human society more generally. Just as commodities

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were created by individuals, the commodities in turn created or at least markedly shaped those same individuals.

These studies also speak to broader questions of economic analysis by demonstrating that culture—the tastes and practices of groups and individuals—has always played a central role in constituting and defining demand, value, and labor supply.<sup>1</sup> Thus these studies are in various ways (sometimes unintentional) critiques of neoliberal “scientific categories of analysis” that ignore or flatten the richness and variety of human experiences and misrepresent the past. These works also show that the current emphasis on cultural, gender, and environmental history, which seems mostly concerned with political issues, can and should richly inform economic history as well.<sup>2</sup>

It is easiest to begin with Wolfgang Schivelbusch’s intriguing *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants* because it starts with Europeans’ adoption of arabica in the middle of the seventeenth century, which set in motion a world coffee economy. Schivelbusch, a German cultural historian, is interested in coffee as one of several “*Genussmittel*” (spices and stimulants used for their pleasurable effects) that have played large roles in the “Western world” since the early modern period.

It is more than coincidence that the botanical name of the most popular species of coffee was “arabica.” For three hundred years, coffee was a Middle Eastern monopoly. When it arrived in Europe, it came as an extension of a medieval Orientalism. Schivelbusch argues convincingly that this fascination with the exotic was very different from the imperialistic condescension that Edward Said has identified. In Renaissance and early modern Europe, eastern goods were valued as symbols of refinement that were used to distinguish the aristocracy from rude commoners. Aristocrats borrowed the culture of the more sophisticated Middle East and Orient just as Latin American elites later borrowed European culture. Foods played a major part in tying these worlds together: “Social connections, balance of power, wealth, prestige, and all manner of fantasies were ‘tasted’: what would become matters of social and cultural ‘taste’ or fashion were first matters of physical tasting” (p. 7).

Although a cultural history, *Tastes of Paradise* also sheds light on a

1. An ambitious anthropological attempt to examine this insight is *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See also the excellent review essay by James Ferguson, “Cultural Exchange: New Developments in the Anthropology of Commodities,” *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 4 (1988):488–513.

2. Two of the best and most influential recent cultural histories that demonstrate the emphasis on the political are *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, edited by Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1994); and *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*, edited by William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, and William E. French (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1994).

central question of economics: how is demand created? For Schivelbusch, demand is socially constituted, having much more to do with distinction, as Bourdieu has argued, than with physical taste. The consumption of coffee became widespread only after the French aristocracy adopted it. Impressed by the ostentation of the Ottoman emissary to the court of Louis XIV, French aristocrats mimicked his dress and ceremony. The beverage was secondary to the elegant porcelain that was first introduced from the Orient to hold coffee. New aristocratic manners were adopted to legitimize the ruling order of the absolutist state, an order now based on breeding and decorum rather than on medieval martial prowess.

Social meaning is not fixed or static, however. Schivelbusch notes that coffee, although significant for the European aristocracy, was much more important in helping define the world of the bourgeoisie: "It spread through the body and achieved chemically and pharmacologically what rationalism and the Protestant ethic sought to fulfill spiritually and ideologically" (p. 39). At this point, physiological effects began to create demand. In this era, coffee was served more often as a medicine or drug than as a beverage. Known as the "Great Soberer," coffee was connected to clear thinking and seriousness of purpose—the beverage of intellectuals and businessmen, not revelers. Historian Jules Michelet branded it "anti-erotic," and English housewives petitioned Charles II to ban coffee because it distracted their husbands from their marital duties. This strange association of coffee with sexual abstinence is regrettably never fully explained in *Tastes of Paradise*. In the Middle East, in contrast, coffee was often associated with licentiousness, while most other exotic foods (such as tobacco, potatoes, and sugar) were considered aphrodisiacs when first introduced. In Europe, however, coffee was associated with the intellect rather than with sensuality.

Part of the reason for coffee's embourgeoisment lies in the importance of the site of coffee consumption, the café. Cafés had served as one of the few public spaces for men in the Middle East, just as they became in Europe. More proper than taverns, cafés in Europe became the first men's clubs, mercantile exchanges, and literary and artistic centers. Coffee meant sociability, but an individualistic sociability: no one buys a round of coffee.

Arabica also played a gendered role to which Schivelbusch gives insufficient attention. In general, women were not allowed into most coffee houses. They had to drink their coffee in the marketplace or at home. As had been the case in the Middle East, cafés were for male sociability and as such diminished the family as social center. This practice changed, particularly in Germany, as coffee became cheaper and more readily available. Housewives began to consider brewing a good cup of coffee at home a mark of domestic achievement. Women gathered together in their kaffeeklatsches. As a result, "coffee, which began as a

symbol of public life, activity, business etc. ended up as a symbol of family life and domestic tranquility" (p. 72). Schivelbusch laments this change as a fall from "heroic" to "gemütlich," revealing his own preference for the public over the private.

Schivelbusch describes similarly how the social meanings of chocolate, tobacco, beer, alcohol, and narcotics changed over time. He observes that all these goods have been attacked initially as addictive and harmful but that their consumption over time became popular and accepted. The exception is narcotics, which he believes will soon follow the same pattern.

*Tastes of Paradise* takes its reader on a fascinating voyage through the world of food and beverage consumption. The study displays the virtues of the best cultural history: wide-ranging, innovative, and clever, it draws imaginative and often persuasive connections that one would ordinarily not consider. At the same time, the volume shares the faults of some other cultural histories: its evidentiary base is small and impressionistic; it sometimes deals with similarities rather than causalities; and it is prone to making huge and basically unsustainable generalizations, such as asserting that coffee was a Protestant drink and chocolate a Catholic one. *Tastes of Paradise* is not a definitive study, but it is replete with exciting and stimulating hypotheses that open up a new world for further investigation.

In stressing consumption, Schivelbusch treats coffee production as a *deus ex machina*. But for William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper Kutschbach, the editors of *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America*, production and its social and economic consequences are the central concerns. The ten essays contributed by historians, anthropologists, and sociologists mostly discuss the power relations that developed in the coffee fields of Central and South America.

Although the contributors skillfully apply the traditional methods of social history and anthropology, *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* has a postmodern cast to it. Attempting to modify such grand structural theories as dependency or world-systems analysis, the contributors tend to stress differences rather than commonalities, anomalies rather than rules. They emphasize diversity, defined as the impact of "particular aspects of distinct regional experiences" (p. 2) that were shaped by local agency, contingency, and prior history. They also note that categories of analysis and social meanings cannot be preconceived and then uniformly thrust on subjects like straitjackets. This stress on diversity and variation is a healthy corrective to most studies of economic activities—whether neoliberal, Marxist, or world systems—that too often simplify, standardize, and reify actors and forces. But so much difference can detract from coherence in a volume that embraces nine contributors analyzing such diverse issues as gender, racial identity, creation of smallholdings, con-

sumption, and political power in seven different countries. My students who read the paperback edition in a senior seminar were a bit bewildered by all the variation.<sup>3</sup>

Part of the problem is that although William Roseberry states in his fine introductory essay that these essays are not “a collection of case studies” but rather “a theoretical contribution to the comparative analysis of the history of capitalism in Latin America,” few of the essays seem to be guided by that larger goal (p. 7). While the contributors problematize in innovative and compelling ways such issues as gender (Verena Stolcke), ethnic identity (Héctor Pérez Brignoli, David McCreery), planter hegemony (Mauricio Font, Michael Jiménez), and land tenure and class formation (William Roseberry, Fernando Pico, Lowell Gudmundson, Mario Samper Kutschbach), only Roseberry, Stolcke, and to a lesser extent Samper make comparisons across national boundaries. One might expect a history of capitalism to concern itself, at least in part, with the developmental effects of coffee. But income levels, linkages, tax revenues, terms of trade, and the nature of foreign investment are subordinate and indeed often invisible in this collection.

The lack of comparison in *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* is a serious drawback if one wishes to assess the economic, social, and political effects of concentrating on coffee exports. So is the sampling of countries. The all-too-common tendency to treat all countries as sovereign equals implies that the experience of each is equally valid and important. In this volume, only one essay focuses on Brazil, while half of the chapters are on Central America. But Brazil is not just another case when studying coffee. Brazil produced as much as four-fifths of the world's crop. Its single largest plantation, the Cambuhy estate in São Paulo, covered more land than the entire coffee-growing area of Costa Rica. Continental-sized Brazil contained remarkably different systems of coffee production. Yet to the extent that Brazil is even mentioned in these chapters, it is treated as just one monolithic case. My point is that although the sample of cases in *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* is adequate to demonstrate great variation among coffee systems, it does not indicate larger trends and outcomes of coffee production in general because the most important grower gets short shrift.

My reservations about the volume as a unit should not overshadow the fact that the individual parts are much greater than their sum. There is some terrific stuff here. William Roseberry's wide-ranging essay does a fine job of setting up methodological concerns. He emphasizes heterogeneity, pointing out that coffee was rarely a monoculture and smallhold-

3. A recent study that also stresses diversity but integrates it more successfully into an overall thesis on the relationship of coffee export economies and state-building in Central America is Robert G. Williams, *States and Social Evolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

ings were common. They existed in divergent “fields of power,” with complicated and shifting systems of labor and land tenure. This diversity gave rise to multiple and evolving forms of state and class power with diverse institutional manifestations.

Only one essay examines international markets. Michael Jiménez contributes the best and most thoroughly researched piece I have found on the usually ignored history of coffee drinking in the United States. He discusses the growth of consumption, the increasing sophistication of roasting, grinding, and marketing, and attempts to improve quality. Jiménez notes the social importance of coffee in the United States: “coffee became in both material and symbolic terms one of the seemingly indissoluble links holding together modern capitalist society in the United States” (p. 52). This essay might have been an avenue for exploring Marx’s observation that “production, distribution, exchange and consumption . . . all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity.”<sup>4</sup> That unity does not appear in this volume, however.

Instead, the other contributions to *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* all focus on production and its sociopolitical consequences. In another essay, Jiménez examines the limits of planter hegemony and the growth of smallholder political power, a subject also addressed in separate essays by Mauricio Font and Mario Samper Kutschbach. Jiménez finds that planters in the Magdalena Valley in Colombia were challenged locally by small growers, *contrabandistas*, and urban petty bourgeois and were unable to summon an ideological vision that could unite them. At the same time, planters failed to assert themselves nationally because of differences with conservative landowners in the west. Jiménez argues persuasively that as a result, their hegemony was “fractured” (p. 275).

Font comes up with the same finding for the state of São Paulo, the one system in which large-scale *fazendeiros* have been considered most successful in asserting their control. He argues that immigrant *colonos* could become smallholders and assert political influence through an alliance with one fraction of the *fazendeiro* class. Unfortunately, Font lacks the space in an essay to develop and prove his contention, which is more clearly delineated in his book.<sup>5</sup>

Samper also finds in his sophisticated, thoughtful analysis that the power of large-scale planters declined in Costa Rica and Colombia during the crisis years of 1920 through 1936 because of state interventions. But despite the apparent similarities in the economic structures of the two

4. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 99. Sidney Mintz’s study of sugar may come closest to accomplishing this task for an international commodity. See Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985). William Cronon expertly combines the stories of production, distribution, and consumption in *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991).

5. Mauricio Font, *Coffee, Contention, and Change* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

economies, state participation differed markedly in each. The results of the Great Depression in Costa Rica were the absence of social change in the coffee areas but a stronger interventionist state in processing, marketing, and finance. In Colombia, the state's role in the coffee economy itself widened little, but land-tenure reform ensued. Samper emphasizes that this outcome was not predestined by the structures of the economies and certainly not by any "logic of capital" but rather by human agency and contingency.

Human agency is also highlighted in the essays on land tenure by Lowell Gudmundson and Fernando Pico. Gudmundson's well-researched micro-analysis of smallholders allows him to explain more fully the political results pointed out by Samper. Costa Rica developed a small "peasant bourgeoisie" and a large landless class but little political radicalization in good part because of inheritance practices. Land was still fairly widely held, the landless were often members of landed clans, and nearly half the population had the opportunity to migrate to new agricultural frontiers. When the revolution broke out in 1948, the petty bourgeoisie was reformist but anti-communist. Its members supported a regime that would provide state credit, processing, and marketing but would leave land tenure untouched. Pico perceives a movement toward social differentiation and concentration in the two barrios of Puerto Rico that he studied. In a tantalizing ground-level glimpse of the process of commodification of land, in-migration, pauperization, and commercialization, Pico's contribution charts the success of five waves of landowners. Few of the original subsistence farmers held on to their land once the coffee boom increased demand. The first local-born modest *finca* owners were more successful, but then came Puerto Ricans from other *municipios*, followed by a small group of Spanish immigrants, and finally a few foreign commercial firms that ended up owning about three-fifths of the land by 1900. This glimpse makes one await anxiously a more complete study based on a larger sample and some discussion of why landholding patterns in Costa Rica and Puerto Rico differed so substantially.

The contributions of David McCreery and Héctor Pérez Brignoli to *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* both concentrate on the forced incorporation of marginal ethnic groups into coffee economies. McCreery focuses on the transition from coerced to free labor of the Maya in Guatemala between 1920 and 1945. This sophisticated and iconoclastic study convincingly argues that the Maya had turned "coercive" labor forms such as debt peonage and vagrancy laws to their own advantage. The end of extra-economic coercion through abolition of the vagrancy law in 1945 was not a Maya victory, however, but rather a sign that the Mayan population had expanded beyond the ability of village lands to feed them. They thus had to turn to the broader wage economy to survive. Ironically, then, coercion was a sign of a relatively healthy Indian sector, wage labor

a sign of its demise.<sup>6</sup> Pérez Brignoli's provocative essay on shifting ethnic boundaries suggests that La Matanza in 1932 in El Salvador was as much an Indian insurrection opposing incorporation into the wage economy as a Communist uprising. Unfortunately, actual data on the rebels are sparse, and thus Pérez Brignoli had to rely heavily on deduction and interpolation to develop his plausible and intriguing argument.

Verena Stolcke adds another crucial dimension to the study of the coffee economy that complicates conventional analyses concentrating solely on male labor or treating all laborers as homogeneous. She points to the importance of families in "shaping strategies of accumulation adopted by coffee capital" (p. 66). Women and children were central in providing a flexible labor supply, self-provisioning, and social reproduction of the labor force even though they are "nowhere to be seen" in studies because their work was intermittent, unrecorded in pay sheets, and mostly conducted away from the coffee groves. Stolcke underlines their significance both on the large plantations of Brazil that she has studied herself and on small coffee fincas in Colombia, Costa Rica, and Venezuela.

The importance of the families of laborers is a vital insight that strengthens the central, although rather unacknowledged, point of *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* that the coffee system was driven by more than simple calculations of supply and demand made by economically rational men. Stolcke stresses the importance of family morality—the issue of when women and children were allowed to enter the workforce—in affecting the availability and nature of labor supply. This argument is similar to Gudmundson's and Pico's analyses of family strategies in shaping land tenure. It also resembles in a different way McCreery's insistence on the agency of the Maya and the structural importance of their semi-proletarian status to the overall economy. As McCreery and Pérez Brignoli make clear, ethnicity mediated market relations. And politics definitely set boundaries on the possible and probable, as Font, Jiménez, and Samper all demonstrate.

But while Stolcke's essay is attuned to the revisionist bent of the volume, the other contributors to *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* prove her point that women and families are rarely considered in studies of coffee. Women, except as members of families, are in evidence nowhere else in the volume. Stolcke must therefore be gratified to see the recent publication of *Women of the Mexican Countryside, 1850–1990*, a pioneering effort to bring women into rural studies. But among its contributors, only Piedad Peniche Rivero is primarily guided by the same concern with the structural economic role of families and female work. In her brief suggestive essay on Yucatán's henequen industry, Peniche Rivero

6. McCreery develops this theme much more fully in his recently published book, *Rural Guatemala, 1760–1940* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).



argues that debt peonage, created largely to pay marriage costs, was more important as a social relationship tying planters and peons together in order to provide social reproduction than as an economic relationship directed at production. The other contributors focus elsewhere. The historians examine the extent and nature of female landowning and labor, while the anthropologists seek to show changes in household structures and practices that attended an evolving economy.

One finds a great deal of variation in method, focus, and chronology in the essays of *Women of the Mexican Countryside*. Editors Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughn stretch in their thoughtful introduction to find common themes in these essays about women's participation in such diverse arenas as agriculture, industry, the household, the garden, commerce, warfare, and education. Most of the contributions explore "capitalist penetration and modernization on women's incorporation into the labor force" (p. xvii), while providing insights into the changing nature of rural households, the construction of gender ideology, and some discussion of political participation. Unfortunately, the focus is blurred because the first essay, a suggestive discussion of "democratic patriarchy" in mid-nineteenth-century Puebla by Florencia Mallon, exhibits different concerns from the rest of the volume. Only one other contribution, the last piece by JoAnn Martin, directly assays the subject of women in politics, although Mary Kay Vaughn and Elizabeth Salas study education and *soldaderas* respectively to survey new public spaces opening up for women.

The only essay that centers on coffee production is Heather Fowler-Salamini's provocative study of Córdoba, Veracruz. She finds that women were playing a substantial role in the crop even before the export boom of the 1890s. As coffee production grew, a combination of land concentration and parcelization together with in-migration from other areas expanded female participation even further. By 1910 women in Córdoba constituted one-quarter of the wage-labor force, one-third of the farmers, and fully four-fifths of the processors. Women indeed tended to receive the worst jobs and the lowest pay, but Fowler-Salamini finds that when coffee prices rose and with them the demand for labor, gender differentials in wages declined. She asserts, "Gender did not play a significant role in the subsistence coffee economy, where economic priorities took precedence over patriarchal family values" (p. 64). The coffee export boom was already weakening patriarchy before the Mexican Revolution. This finding is the exact opposite of Peniche Rivero's conclusion on the relative importance of economics and patriarchy in the henequen area, implying that crop-specific gendered social relations of production may well have existed. Unfortunately, none of the contributors to the volume pursue this line of inquiry. The nature of the main crop is treated as exogenous. But as Albert Hirschman has convincingly argued from a developmental per-

spective, linkages are very much crop-specific. It stands to reason that gender relations should also be so affected.<sup>7</sup>

Although not looking directly at coffee or exports, other essays in *Women of the Mexican Countryside* shed light on the relationship between crops and gendered production systems. Through exhaustive research in local archives, Francie Chassen-López finds much greater female participation in Oaxacan landownership and labor than was recorded in national censuses. Villages dividing up their communal lands as a consequence of the Reforma laws gave as much as 25 percent of the parceled lands to widows. According to the official (under)count, 15 percent of the rural labor force in 1907 was female. Chassen-López notes that in frontier areas, which tended toward export production of coffee and other commodities, women played a larger role in agriculture than in more traditional areas dominated by communal lands, haciendas, and *minifundios* producing subsistence crops.

Patricia Arias's wide-ranging essay also finds variation in rural gender and household-production relations. But she concentrates on the form of family morality and landownership (either peasant, indigenous, or *ranchero*) rather than on the commodity produced. Indigenous women played the most independent roles because of their considerable participation in commerce, services, and handicrafts. This point is confirmed by Soledad González Montes's outstanding study of Nahuatl-speaking Xalatlaco, which finds one-third of rural agricultural workers to have been female in 1910, and by Judith Friedlander's rich biography of Doña Zeferina Barreto, an Indian women from Morelos who engaged in numerous economic activities.

Peasant women, in contrast, tended more toward complementary rather than independent roles. While their husbands worked on the haciendas, the wives cultivated their own milpas and worked seasonally on the haciendas but did not participate much in commerce and services. Gail Mummert's study of a village in Zamora and María de Gloria Marroñi de Velázquez's essay on the Valley of Atlixco in Puebla identify the same trend but emphasize additional forces that pushed women into the public sphere of work. Improving household technology and electricity, gas, and running water liberated daughters and daughters-in-law from onerous household tasks. This trend, combined with the out-migration of men (mostly to the United States) and the advent of new feminine work opportunities such as strawberry canneries in Zamora, undercut both the broader patriarchy and matriarchy of the household.

Ranchera women, who were the most restricted to the household

7. Albert Hirschman, "A Generalized Linkage Approach to Development, with Special Reference to Staples," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 25, supplement (1977):67–98.

because of ranchero morality, make up the third group in Arias's model. Married women in particular were not allowed to work outside the house, even if their husbands were working in the United States.

Although helpful, Arias's model leaves some important questions. How does one define the three groups? If the definitions are strictly based on behavior, they become tautological. The relative importance of labor relations, household material conditions, and group morality in prescribing female conduct is not clear, nor is the extent to which women have been the agents rather than the subjects of change. Complex land and labor relations leading to heterogeneous class positions need to be taken into account more. As Fowler-Salamini shows for Veracruz and studies for coffee and other crops elsewhere in Latin America demonstrate, smallholders, Indians, peasants, and rancheros alike grew coffee on their own land, rented, sharecropped, migrated seasonally, and worked for others. They also sometimes engaged in commercial and industrial activities.<sup>8</sup> It seems that a similar sexual division of tasks in the coffee fields existed for all three societies. Women helped with harvesting and weeding but predominated in processing. In the first two activities, women generally formed part of a family labor unit, but those employed in the larger processing mills often worked and lived as individuals, somewhat free from patriarchy. It is extremely important to bring women into the analysis of the countryside, in agricultural as well as domestic tasks. But doing so requires that the specific demands of various crops and productive systems be taken into account, along with questions of household morality.

*Women of the Mexican Countryside* clearly opens vital lines of inquiry by demonstrating the complexity and dynamism of rural gender and household relations. Rural economists must examine the broader productive and social reproductive roles of families. Only at their peril will researchers in the future ignore gender and household relations when studying coffee or other rural activities.

Similarly, Warren Dean's masterful *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* warns readers that the ecology in which history transpires cannot be ignored. His last book before his untimely death, this outstanding work of Latin American history culminates a distinguished career. With poetry and passion, Dean wrote a history of what he called the Brazilian Atlantic Forest. Lengthy and far-reaching historical research is combined with an impressive mastery of botany to present a sweeping and ultimately tragic tale covering thousands of years.

8. Probably the best gendered study of these heterogeneous class positions in the countryside is Carmen Diana Deere, *Households and Class Relations, Peasants, and Landlords in Northern Peru* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

Dean's starting point is the sad fact that humans cannot truly live *in* the dense Atlantic Forest but must cut clearings. They can, however, live *with* the trees. Indigenous peoples had been living with the forest for four hundred generations.

Then came the modern enlightened Portuguese. For much of the first century after contact, the Portuguese relied on native techniques and native labor to extract resources from the forest. The result was not so much production as plunder. Still, the forest was so vast that not much damage was done. Indeed, in a perverse way, the Portuguese may have actually helped restore the forest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Disease and slave raids were exterminating most of the native Tupi people. Survivors often hid in remote forests, afraid to engage in agriculture because their fields would reveal their whereabouts to the slave-hunting Portuguese. Indigenous agriculture virtually ceased, and the forests returned.

The small Portuguese population of three hundred thousand in 1700 hugged the Brazilian coast. Instead of using native knowledge to cultivate native crops, they transferred the slave-based sugar economy from their island colonies in the Atlantic. Land was given out to the politically favored in enormous grants and worked increasingly by African slaves. Although at home the Portuguese had farmed the same land for many generations and the Africans were skilled agriculturalists, the New World slave society disdained reverence for land. Underneath the façade of colonizing and Christianizing modernity lay the same slash-and-burn techniques they had learned from the original inhabitants of Brazil. But as the population became five or six times denser and needed more firewood, some of the forest close to the coast had little time to recover. Equally serious was the fact that the neo-Europeans, rather than living from the hunt, imported livestock that sped the assault on the Atlantic Forest. But even when Brazil secured independence in 1822, the great majority of the Atlantic Forest remained.

The attack on the interior was led by another exotic crop, coffee. Although coffee has been widely heralded as a "modernizing crop" and Brazilian coffee planters as enlightened entrepreneurs, their activity was hardly agriculture at all. It is not coincidental that the same word for workers in mining ("*lavrador*") was also applied to agricultural workers. After twenty or thirty years, coffee trees exhausted the nutrition of the virgin forest, which were then abandoned to pasture and often became denuded wastelands. Brazil captured the world's market for low-priced coffee precisely because land was cheap and fertile. No one calculated depreciation or replacement cost of the living "capital stock." In this sense, coffee planters were feasting and leaving the bill for future generations to pay.

It proved to be an expensive bill because the Atlantic Forest turned out not to be a renewable resource. Deforestation had enormous conse-

quences. Once the mangroves around the bay of Rio de Janeiro were cut down, shellfish and fish declined, as did the game that had fed on them. The rivers that ran into the bay silted over, halting much maritime traffic and increasing the threat of malaria because the waters had become stagnant. Elsewhere the destruction of trees caused periodic droughts and greater extremes in temperatures. Many species vanished.

All these depredations were not caused primarily by ignorant Indians or colonizing Europeans, however. Even the primitive techniques of coffee planters were not the main culprit. Rather, modern technology accelerated the destruction of the Atlantic Forest. The railroad made distant forests accessible, encouraging planters to leave their existing groves more quickly to assault virgin forests further inland. The iron horse also created great demand for crossties and additional wood for fuel. Moreover, it enabled other industries, especially iron smelters, to grow by expanding the area in which they sought charcoal.

The Brazilian state had been unwilling or unable to protect the forest on its own lands because it was poor, weak, and dominated by the landed elite. This situation changed in the 1930s with the establishment of a populist state, and the sense of the forest being an inexhaustible resource began to change by the 1970s. Some efforts to create nature preserves and safeguard public lands followed. But the pace of the assault on forests has barely slackened. The government response to Brazil's tremendous social inequalities has been to stress economic development rather than redistribution of wealth. In this mindset, forests are not a patrimony or a treasure but rather "unexploited resources." All animals and plants exist for the plunder and profit of humans. Brazilian populists and even leftists share conservatives' disdain for other species. All of them argue that conservation is a luxury for the rich. The poor countries must cut down ever more trees and plants to feed their burgeoning populations. Never mind that the land itself is being exhausted.

This is not a new story, of course. Areas of longer dense human settlement had their forests cut down long ago. As Dean bitterly notes, "South America is the forest historian's freshest battleground, where all the fallen still lie sprawled and unburied and where the victors still wander about, looting and burning the train" (p. 5). Today, no more than 8 percent of the original Atlantic Forest remains, and coffee is grown increasingly in other parts of Brazil.

Warren Dean's study is a tragic cautionary tale. It screams out for new forms of analysis that are less humancentric and more aware of the global costs of human actions. Economists and economic historians who only consider the "bottom line" of profit and gross national products and do not calculate replacement and cleanup costs are like the man falling from the skyscraper who was heard to say as he passed each floor on the way down, "so far, so good." Plunder is not the same as development.

The Lacandón rain forest in Mexico, currently under attack by coffee-growing peasants, is the setting for George Collier's *Basta! Land and the Zapatista Rebellion in Chiapas*. This brief but wide-ranging analysis of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas by an anthropologist with more than three decades of research in the area refuses to romanticize the movement. Rather than being simply a remote struggle by a group of traditional Maya Indians, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) is involved in a postmodern movement intimately involved in global trends. Collier and Elizabeth Lowery Quaratiello note that the rebellion involves Maya and peasants more generally, but these groups "are less egalitarian and more differentiated by class and politics" than many analysts think (p. xiv). The EZLN is best thought of as a movement of the poor. The oil boom and the concomitant surge in public-works projects in the 1970s and early 1980s strained village communities. Growing income gaps, out-migration from villages, a decline in family subsistence labor, fissures in the seniority hierarchy as younger men became more independent, and a reduction in nonmonetary reciprocal relations all led to increasing divisions. At the same time, the success of Protestant missionaries upset traditional village hierarchies. Political activists from other states tried to take advantage of growing dissatisfaction in Chiapas, one of Mexico's poorest states. Because village power had long been linked to officials of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, internal disputes took on divisions at the level of political parties. Support for opposition parties, particularly Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's PRD grew.

But what most provoked the tensions that led to revolt were contradictory government policies and heavy-handed tactics by members of the PRI at national and state levels. Eastern Chiapas, a sparsely populated area, became the object of government colonization projects. New *ejidos* were created not only for Chiapanecos but for immigrants from other Mexican states as well. Initially, the Mexican government offered paternalistic assistance, particularly in allowing recent settlers to enter into the burgeoning coffee market. INMECAFE offered low-interest loans and a guaranteed price for coffee. The *finqueros* became heavily indebted as they attempted modern coffee-growing techniques involving herbicides and fertilizer.

Then came the 1982 debt crisis, the end of the public-works projects, and the generalized "restructuring" to make Mexico more "internationally competitive" and attract foreign capital. Loans were called in, colonization and agrarian reform ended, and INMECAFE was disbanded. At the same time, the massacre of Maya populations in Guatemala forced one hundred and fifty thousand Maya to seek refuge in Chiapas and caused the Mexican government to militarize the border. This population pressure increased concurrently with a move in Mexico to set aside and protect ecological zones like the Lacandón forest as nature reserves. Thus was created a formula for revolt.

Collier and Quaratiello point out that rather than peasants revolting against hacendados or Maya against *ladinos*, the heterogenous rebels are revolting against the national government and the PRI. Instead of concerning themselves merely with local problems, they denounce the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and restructuring more generally because they realize that they have been swept into the vortex of international forces. Thus coffee helped bring this once-remote area of southern Mexico into international headlines and the nightly news.

As the five studies reviewed here demonstrate, coffee is more than just a beverage, and the study of commodities is more than a mere economic question. Focusing on this single commodity opens up a world of interrelated questions that inform and animate our lives: the social construction of demand and the meanings of consumption; varied social formations that issue from production and the states built upon them; the interaction of ethnicity, gender, and family morality; the interplay of humans and their environment; and the broader national and international forces that impinge on the locality and are themselves shaped by local factors. These five studies remind us that culture and economics are not alien realms or competitive approaches: they are different faces of the same whole.