the summer of 1532 along the normally difficult route of the Desert of Sechura was possible only because that year experienced an El Niño episode. This circumstance allowed Pizarro and his soldiers to find plenty of water and unusual pastures for their sumpters in an area known for its implacable heat and dryness. Contentious as this idea is, the catastrophic flooding and destruction of dwellings and cultivated fields caused by other El Niños undoubtedly set back the settlement process of many towns and villages in northern Peru, denoting the phenomenon's relevance for colonial history. Decimating droughts and widespread mortality of llama herds and Indian shepherds in Alto Peru were also linked to El Niño; its occurrences in coastal Peru generally trigger droughts in the Andean highlands.

Of similar catastrophic nature have been the droughts of northeastern Brazil, which are also climatologically associated with El Niño episodes on the Pacific side of South America. Famine, social unrest, pillage, and death ensued in northeastern Brazil whenever prolonged droughts occurred in colonial times, in phase with major El Niños. Some anthropologists, moreover, have tied the rise and collapse of certain agricultural communities in coastal Peru to the influences of El Niño, and geographers contend that the reversal of wind systems in the South Pacific during these episodes allowed Polynesian scouts to sail eastward, ultimately to find Easter Island, the easternmost Polynesian outliner. Although details like these are not mentioned in Glantz's otherwise comprehensive synthesis, they enhance the realization of the pertinence that past El Niños can have for the investigation and interpretation of environmental crises that left deep imprints on the social and economic history of Latin America.

Meticulously prepared and conveniently illustrated, *Currents of Change* provides bountiful information about how El Niño episodes are detected in their oceanic and climatological expressions. The numerous chronological tables dispersed throughout the book offer insight into the synchronic responses around the world. In quite an original fashion, Glantz has included, in a chapter titled "In Their Own Words," the paradigmatic key points and seminal ideas of several scholars who have moved forward the frontiers of knowledge on El Niño during the last four decades. This is quite a thoughtful tribute to those individuals and a gesture seldom seen in books of this character.

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Agrarian Structure and Political Power: Landlord and Peasant in the Making of Latin America. Edited by EVELYNE HUBER and FRANK SAFFORD. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995. Tables. Notes. Index. viii, 242 pp. Cloth. $59.95.

This useful volume offers an encounter between social scientists and historians debating the value of Barrington Moore, Jr.'s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (1966) for understanding

the sociopolitical trajectories of modern Latin American nations. The introduction and conclusion, by Evelyn Huber and John Stephens, both social scientists, argue that one of Moore's basic conclusions—that landlords dependent on coercive labor relations and still politically dominant in the era of transition to capitalism are the social foundation of political authoritarianism—is a key to understanding the authoritarian trajectories of many Latin American nations since the 1870s.

Five leading historians test the proposition: Arnold J. Bauer on Chile, Tulio Halperín Donghi on Argentina, Florencia E. Mallon on Mexico and Peru, Frank Safford on Colombia, and Lowell Gudmundson on Central America. All agree that Moore's conclusion cannot explain Latin American authoritarianism. Many see tendencies toward authoritarian politics among landed elites, but argue that the translation of those tendencies into regimes was historically difficult, often indirect, and never certain.

Gudmundson's analysis of Central America comes closest to sustaining Moore, given the relative weakness of landlords in relatively democratic Costa Rica and the persistent power of coercive landlords in persistently authoritarian Guatemala and El Salvador. All agree that historical complexity prevents any direct application of Moore's conclusion to Latin America.

Moore, of course, analyzed nations that competed for world power during the twentieth century (with the exception of India, which he presents as just that, an exception). He did not expect his conclusions to be transferable to nations emerging from colonialism and locked in dependency.

Moore's *approach*, however, emphasizing the historical interactions of changing class structures and state systems, is applicable beyond his case studies. The historical essays in this volume attest to that. In each, a deeply knowledgeable historian, challenged to test the thesis of authoritarian landed elites, applies Moore's approach in exploring relations among elites, the agrarian majority, and evolving political systems. None sustains the thesis of a simple, direct link between coercive landlords and authoritarian regimes. Yet each essay offers revealing insights into the national histories examined. The result is a volume most helpful in understanding the diverse political trajectories of modern Latin American nations. The persistent importance of Moore's seminal work is thus confirmed—not for transferable conclusions, but for an approach that emphasizes the interplay of class relations and state systems as an essential context for historical sociopolitical analysis.

Others have refined Moore's approach: Theda Skocpol argues that states are more autonomous than Moore allows; James C. Scott reminds us that cultural contests inhere in all power relations; Joan Scott emphasizes that powers of class and state are also gender relations; and many have shown that peasants, workers, and other subordinate people have been more active, effective agents in national histories than Moore emphasizes. Still, any scholar seeking an integrated historical analysis of national societies in Latin America or elsewhere will find useful guidance and

challenging comparative perspectives in the classic work of Barrington Moore, Jr.—as this volume attests.

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Broken Promises: Agrarian Reform and the Latin American Campesino. By WILLIAM C. THIESENHUSEN. Boulder: Westview Press, 1995. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 226 pp. Cloth, $59.95. Paper, 19.95.

San Juan Tezontla: lucha por el agua. By ALMA ROSA RODRÍGUEZ ROJO. Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana, 1995. Maps. Tables. Bibliography. 113 pp. Paper.

These two books revolve around a common subject, small-farmer agriculture in rural Latin America, yet they differ in theme and scope. William Thiesenhusen presents an overview of land reform in the whole of Latin America, past and present, with case studies of six countries. In contrast, Alma Rosa Rodríguez Rojo tells a story of what rural life is like in a village near Mexico City and how the village has changed over time, with emphasis on the importance of water as a resource.

Thirty-five years ago, the topic of land reform was at the forefront of any discussion of Latin American agriculture. The Alliance for Progress assigned it such importance that it was a condition imposed by the United States for a Latin American country to receive access to this foreign aid. The dissolution of latifundia was considered necessary to break up the politically and economically powerful landed oligarchy, as well as to provide opportunities for economic advancement, social mobility, and political participation for the masses of campesinos. In the 1970s and 1980s, insurgents in Central American countries pushed land reform as a major component of their demands.

Yet land reform by itself is considered insufficient to improve the economic lot of the campesino. Additional technologically improved inputs, credit, and viable product markets are also necessary. It was the government's responsibility to provide these elements, but this was an impossible task, given the large expenditures and often heavy subsidies required. Thus, many beneficiaries were left out. To make the problem worse, many beneficiaries received small plots of land, insufficient to sustain a family.

The neoliberal economic solutions to the Latin American debt crisis of 1982 exacerbated this situation, calling for fiscal austerity and drastic cutbacks in government spending. Land reform and support for the ancillary institutions were hit hard. Indeed, Chile and Mexico took measures to reverse land reform, allowing beneficiaries to sell or rent their land.

The Thiesenhusen book deals with this whole process very effectively. First it lays out the reasons for land reform in the context of development. Then it describes in detail the land reform process in six countries: Mexico, Bolivia, Guatemala, Chile,