

glish. This quality of the book will no doubt stand as the central measure of the work's value to students interested in the emergence of the contemporary Ecuadorian state.

It should be noted that the manuscript for this volume received the Hubert Herring Memorial Award conferred by the Pacific Council on Latin-American Studies. I hope that the high price of the book will not place it beyond the reach of those who might benefit most from the opportunity to read it.

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La oligarquía peruana: Historia de tres familias. By DENNIS L. GILBERT. Translation by MARIANA MOULD DE PEASE. Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1982. Notes. Tables. Epilogue. Bibliography. Pp. 266. Paper.

Gilbert's work on the formation and evolution of the Peruvian oligarchy, carried out during the 1970s and well known to Peruvianists through the Cornell dissertation series (*The Oligarchy and the Old Regime in Peru*, 1977), has now appeared in translation in Lima. It is a truly captivating story (and analysis) of Peru's fabled 40 families (actually 30 by Gilbert's count). While not his primary intention, Gilbert's book, which focuses on the biographies of three principal Peruvian clans—the Aspíllaga sugar barons, the Prado financial empire, and the Miró Quesada newspaper family (*El Comercio*)—becomes an intimate and revealing portrait of the evolution of modern Peru. In this sense, it may be viewed favorably with the best interpretative histories of Peru, including Cotler's *Clases, estado y nación en el Perú* (1977) and Palmer's *Peru: The Authoritarian Legacy* (1980).

According to Gilbert, the Old Regime spanned a century, from its inception during the "guano age" of the mid-nineteenth century to its collapse in the aftermath of the military revolution of 1968. It was built on an export economy (guano) which diversified after the Pacific War into sugar, cotton, and minerals. An oligarchical "golden age" emerged between 1895 and 1919, dominated by the "direct" rule of the Civilist party. Thereafter, a "tripartite" system of rule dominated in which the oligarchy governed indirectly through a compliant military which repressed and then assimilated the populist forces of APRA after the "convivencia" of 1956. This system finally collapsed after 1968 when a reformist military regime moved to systematically eliminate the foundations of oligarchical power through a series of major reforms that included land reform, nationalization of mining and the banking system, and the "statization" of the principal Lima newspapers.

These pillars of oligarchical power and their interconnection are strikingly revealed in the three individual biographies that constitute the core of the book. Each is based on a careful examination of primary sources—the Aspíllaga/Cayaltí papers in the Archivo del Fuero Agrario, the trial record of the state suit against

the directors of the Banco Popular, and various informants close to these families. What follows is an absorbing account of the rise and fall of “Cayaltí,” the Aspíllaga sugar estate on the north coast; the Prado financial empire based on the Banco Popular which was run in a patrimonial rather than strictly capitalist fashion, not untypical of Peruvian capitalism in general; and the Miró Quesada control of *El Comercio* which, along with Pedro Beltrán’s *La Prensa*, formed the crucial ideological and propagandistic outlets that shaped and manipulated public opinion.

There is much more that could be said about this richly detailed and carefully documented book. Suffice it to say that anyone interested in the structure and function of the Peruvian oligarchy and the state which it dominated for so long would do well to consult *La oligarquía peruana*.

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Plantation Agriculture and Social Control in Northern Peru, 1875–1933. By MICHAEL J. GONZALEZ. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985. Tables. Figure. Maps. Notes. Index. Pp. 235. Cloth. \$25.00.

In the past two decades, a growing body of scholars have questioned the traditional interpretations of plantation life in Latin America. The often facile and sometimes merely politically convenient interpretation of debt peonage, for example, as a universally brutal and efficient method of exploiting peasants has been scrutinized in some remarkably enlightening studies, such as this one by Michael Gonzalez. Rather than accepting the extrapolation of conclusions reached by students of one region—the henequen plantations of Yucatán, for example—to the whole of Latin America, Gonzalez and others have turned their attention to other regions. Not surprisingly perhaps, but certainly convincingly, Gonzalez found diversity where the earlier signposts had pointed to unity.

Gonzalez’s study focuses on the sugar plantations of northern Peru, extracting much of his materials from the records of Cayaltí, a plantation owned and developed by the Aspíllaga family. He traces the rise of large plantation agriculture geared to the export market from the mid-nineteenth century through the Great Depression. His findings add immeasurably to our knowledge of how things really worked in Peru’s major industry—sugar—during this period of rapid change and adjustment.

Peru’s own capitalists—not the English or North Americans—for example, were the principal sources of revenue for expanding and modernizing the industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Earlier readers of Rosemary Thorp’s and Geoffrey Bertram’s *Peru, 1890–1977: Growth and Policy in an Open Economy* will find much of what was concluded in that book confirmed in this one.

The labor for the take-off period in the industry’s development came from the ports of China, not the shacks of the Andes. When slavery was abolished in Peru,