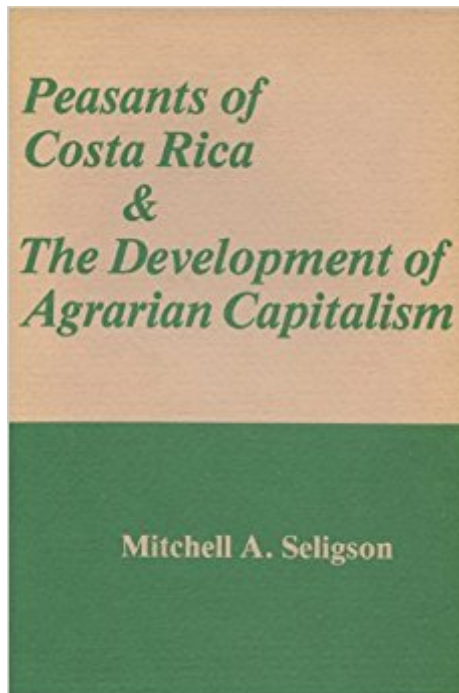




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Peasants Of Costa Rica And The Development Of Agrarian Capitalism



Synopsis

This book, which traces the evolution of the Costa Rican peasantry from colonial times to the present, focuses on the impact of agrarian capitalism, a key factor in the social and political change of the Costa Rican peasant society. Scholars and students in political science, sociology, economics, agricultural history, the history of politics of Central America, and all whose interests include the study of peasant movements and behavior will welcome it. It is, in a large sense, a story of peasant nonrebellion, providing a new interpretation of Costa Rica by redefining the image of the yeoman peasant. Mitchell A. Seligson draws upon a wealth of historical and census materials, as well as extensive interview data, in drawing his conclusions. Whereas most recent studies of peasants focus on the historical or the contemporary, this study overlooks neither, placing the present situation in the context of a detailed historical treatment. In contrast with the many studies emphasizing peasant rebellion, Seligson argues that peasants, when displaced by radical economic change, turn to violence only as a last resort. Given an alternative, they have gone far in adapting to change such as, in this case, the introduction of agro-capitalism. The author shows how and why the Costa Ricans have been transformed from a homogenous society of small landowners to a stratified society where landless agricultural workers predominate. The second part of the book examines the present situation of the peasants in the light of history. Nearly three-quarters of Costa Rican peasant today are without land, and the distribution of land among landowners is vastly unequal. Using interviews that he conducted on a sample of more than five hundred peasants, Seligson uncovered strong evidence pointing to insecurity as a fundamental concern of the contemporary peasant. In response to this insecurity, many peasants have become squatters, a debilitating situation which the government has been attempting to correct through a land reform program. Scholars who are investigating land reform in other nations can find major implications in this original research.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mitchell A. Seligson is the centennial professor of political science and professor of sociology at Vanderbilt University. He was the Daniel H. Wallace Chair of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh and its director of the Center for Latin American Studies. He has written numerous articles that have appeared in journals including Latin American Research Review, Comparative Political Studies, and American Journal of Sociology. His other publications include, Development and Underdevelopment: The Political Economy of Global Inequality, and The Legitimacy Puzzle in Latin America: Democracy and Political Support in Eight Nations.

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