Gran Bretaña y el Perú: Los mecanismos de un control económico.

This is the concluding volume of a valuable series which thus far reproduced the commercial and financial reports of British consuls and vice-consuls stationed in Peru during the period from 1826 to 1919. In this final series publication, the author moves beyond his previous role of compiler to serve as a commentator and analyst of the reasons for the profound disarticulation of the Peruvian economy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Bonilla describes an economy totally dependent upon the uncertainties of the world markets and characterized by extraordinary regionalism and compartmentalization. Such a powerful dependency severed communication amidst the ports of Peru and atrophied contacts between the littoral and the hinterland’s centers of population.

The author demonstrates well how careful use of the British consular reports may serve as partial compensation for the lack of solid national statistics about Peru’s international trade. In this final volume, he chose to combine four related studies: the evolution of the Peruvian Corporation (1821–1872) and its relationship to the national debt; the commercial control exercised by British merchants over the nineteenth-century Peruvian economy; an area study of the integration of southern Peru into the world economy; and a brief but fascinating look at eastern Peru’s rubber trade. He illustrates how the consular reports offer insights about the social patterns of the time. Thus, we notice the abrupt decline of real wages throughout Peru in the decade prior to World War I and the accompanying increased vulnerability of the poor to epidemics, particularly to the ravages of tuberculosis (pp. 63, 65, 128).

Heraclio Bonilla has shown both skill and judicious care in his use of evidence. While a simple line map would have been of value to this book and although several tables ought to have been labeled more clearly, this volume—and indeed the entire series—should be in the library of every student concerned with Latin America’s international trade or with the history of nineteenth-century Peru.

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