

Francisco Vidal Luna and Herbert S. Klein, *An Economic and Demographic History of São Paulo*. California: Stanford University Press, 2018. 480 pp. \$75.00

In this book, Vidal Luna and Klein use coffee as a prism through which they read the political and economic history of Brazil. By following the expansion of coffee crops in the country, the authors discuss slavery, violence, migration, infrastructure, urbanization and industrialization. On a macro-economic level, neoliberalism, economic interventionism, export-led growth, and the great depression, amongst other development topics, fill out the pages of the book with the depiction of political-economic decision-making and its consequences. The authors zoom in on São Paulo to discuss key development paths adopted in Brazil in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the role of the state in supporting an agrarian economy as well as the role of the agro-elite on politics. The details of this story are as follows.

The book starts by demonstrating limiting factors in coffee production, namely, labour shortage and a precarious system of transportation in the mid-1800s. The description of the quality of the roads and the use of mule trains to navigate them triggers the imagination of extreme working conditions. In addition, the authors describe health conditions such as cholera plagues and yellow fever outbreaks, thus adding to the previous picture of precarious infrastructure. What follows, however, towards the end of the book, is a description which focuses on the development of roads, ports, abundant migrant workers and an incipient industry in the region. How do we move from hazardous conditions in a fertile land to full-speed economic, demographic and infrastructure growth? This is what the authors deliver in the subsequent chapters, a journey into how São Paulo became ‘one of the leading metropolises in Brazil and eventually its single largest urban center’ (p. 223).

Using fine-grained research, including maps, census evidence, and several graphs, the authors describe the development of São Paulo, focusing specifically on the entrenchment of agrarian and political interests. Buying overproduction, devaluing currency to support exports, subsidising infrastructure provision, offering school provision, modifying land and

migration laws; these were the many ways in which the state interfered with agrarian production, so it was no coincidence that coffee barons and the government were often one and the same. It is however puzzling to think that the system of political and agrarian entanglement changed in the early twentieth century - even though one fed the other. The response to that puzzle is rationalized when the 1930s in Brazil is addressed (chapter 5), a period that epitomised a national development thirst that disrupted regional oligarchies. State-led industrialization hoped to create a domestic market protecting the country from external shocks in what was an export-led economic model; labour programmes and urbanization followed. Industrial development, however, of course thrived where people were more educated, infrastructure existed, and a domestic market was already growing. The book is successful in demonstrating São Paulo's development path and leadership in both the industrial and agricultural sector.

The data Vidal Luna and Klein collate is impressive in its depth; they address Brazil's constitutions and laws, the making of a middle class, and the urbanization of what is today one of the largest cities in the world. São Paulo is described from its departure point as a small province until its urban age. Yet it is exactly this detailed history of São Paulo's industrial growth that raises more questions; neither the environmental implications related to the growth of coffee nor the relationship of the latter with fast-paced urbanization process in São Paulo gain space in the analysis. The book fosters the imagination of the previous forests in the region when pointing at the concrete jungle that is São Paulo but, being politically- and economic-centred, environmental aspects fail to gain traction. This is understandable, as the book offers a discussion of the political and economic life of a great urban enclave. Development choices in Brazil and their environmental consequences, however, particularly in a city that is nowadays affected all the way from floods to water shortage, are of great importance.

The temporality of writing the past in the present, of course, does not always necessitate giving importance to the issues of today when looking at data from a previous time. Politics,

economics, infrastructure, migration, and urbanization are certainly the topics that better translate the concerns of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Brazil, and the writers position themselves firmly as eyewitness of that period. Giving attention to what was important then, the book offers an extraordinary opportunity to delve into the early stages of São Paulo's urbanization. This is a compelling and must-read book for those with a research agenda on coffee [production](#) in Brazil, political economy in Latin America, and Brazil's development more broadly. For hurried scholars, the conclusion is short and chapters are not recapitulated. This is not a book that can be summarised in few words; it possesses nearly one hundred tables, alongside forty-nine figures and eleven maps. Vidal Luna and Klein thus unearth a precious treasure when it comes to economic and demographic data of São Paulo.

Andreza Aruska De Souza Santos

University of Oxford