

Tobacco on the Periphery

A Case Study in Cuban Labour History, 1860-1958

New expanded edition

Jean Stubbs



This new edition expands on the 1985 original, adding other source material (historical images, statistical tables, archival documents), with a new author's Preface and a Foreword by Victor Bulmer-Thomas.

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Tabaco en la periferia: El complejo agro-industrial cubano y su movimiento obrero 1860-1959

This is the story of Cuban tobacco, whose agricultural and industrial development was fashioned as deftly as a Havana cigar around overseas trading interests. It traces the nineteenth-century growth of a strong tobacco oligarchy, peasant grower class and urban salaried work force, alongside slave and indentured labour, and examines how a prestigious manufacturing country was transformed into an exporter of leaf. Visibly poor peasant agriculture concealed foreign and home capital which, while creating some large plantations, used and even propagated a most extreme form of sharecropping. Well into the twentieth century, an increasingly embattled industry catered to dwindling luxury markets and an unstable, fluctuating home market with but a few relatively large, on the whole family, concerns and a proliferation of small sweatshop and outwork production.

Jean Stubbs penetrates the finer socio-political aspects of the radically changing nature and composition of peasantry and proletariat, including the interlacing of race, gender and skill, to take a closer look at areas of class action and national and class consciousness, be it through reformism, anarcho-syndicalism, revolutionary nationalism, socialism or communism.

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