Land Reform in Puerto Rico
Modernizing the Colonial State, 1941–1969
Ismael García-Colón

“Offers a refreshing and much-needed fine-grained ethnographic and historic examination of the years of the Partido Popular reforms.”—Vilma Santiago-Irizarry, Cornell University

The 1930s and the reign of the New Dealers in Washington brought incredible changes to Puerto Rican society. A new land redistribution plan, formalized in the 1941 Land Law, aimed at enfranchising, empowering, and urbanizing the landless workers by resettling them in parcels that they would own. With these new urban communities built, community cooperation and services such as potable water, electricity, education, and sanitation followed. The result was that, twenty years after the passage of the Land Law, Puerto Rico was cited internationally as a paragon of modern development.

In this intimate and enlightening work, Ismael García-Colón uses ethnography, political and economic theory, and primary and secondary historical sources to paint a compelling and human portrait of the land redistribution program. He assesses not only the technical and political aspects of the program but also the ways in which the Puerto Rican people actively resisted, accommodated, and influenced the development it brought about. Finally, García-Colón takes a clear look at the successes and failures of this historic program, which attempted in vain to reconcile the conflicting interests of planned development and free-market economics.

Ismael García-Colón is assistant professor of anthropology at CUNY College of Staten Island.

184 pp. | 6 x 9 | 10 b/w photos, 1 map
ISBN 978-0-8130-3363-1 | Hardcover $69.95 $42.00

40% discount through 09/15/09!