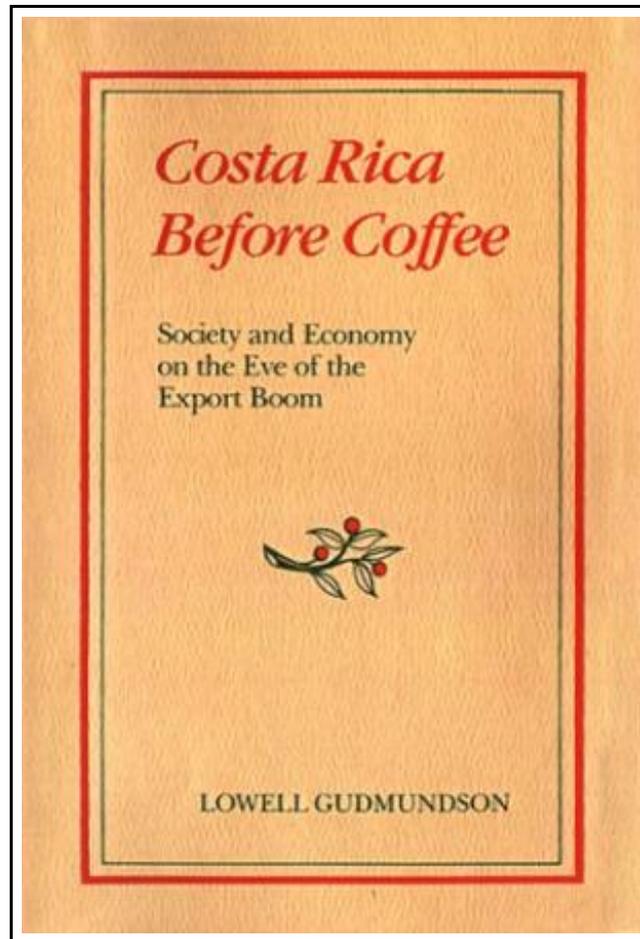


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Louisiana State University Press, United States, 1986. Paperback. Book Condition: New. 229 x 154 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book ***** Print on Demand *****.Costa Rica Before Coffee centers on the decade of the 1840s, when the impact of coffee and export agriculture began to revolutionize Costa Rican society. Lowell Gudmundson focuses on the nature of the society prior to the coffee boom, but he also makes observations on the entire sweep of Costa Rican history, from earliest colonial times to the present, and in his final chapter compares the country s development and agrarian structures with those of other Latin American nations. These wide-ranging applications follow inevitably, since the author convincingly portrays the 1840s as they key decade in any interpretation of Costa Rican history.Gudmundson synthesizes and questions the existing historical literature on Costa Rica, relegating much of it to the realm of myth. He attacks what he calls the rural democratic myth (or rural egalitarian model) of Costa Rica s past, a myth that he argues has pervaded the country s historiography and politics and has had a huge impact on its image abroad and on its citizens self-image. The rural democratic myth paints a rather idyllic picture of the country s past. It holds that prior to the coffee boom, the vast majority of Costa Rica s population was made up of peasants who owned small farms and were largely self-sufficient. These peasants enjoyed a high degree of social and economic quality; there were no important social distinctions and little division of labor. According to the myth, the primary source of this relatively egalitarian social order was the period of colonial rule, which ended in 1821. The new developments wrought by coffee and agrarian capitalism are seen as destructive of this rural democracy and as leading...

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