

THE ROAD TO THE LAND OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

A History of the Interoceanic Highway in Peru

STEPHEN G. PERZ AND JORGE LUIS CASTILLO HURTADO

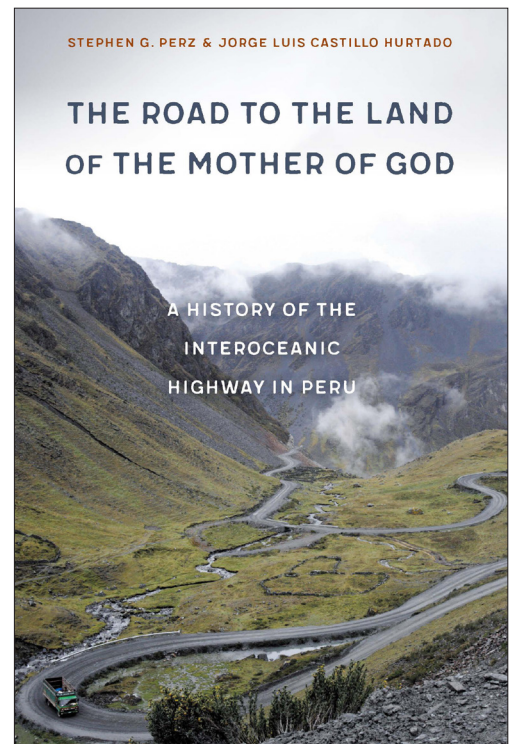
"This book teaches us the challenges of integration in Peru. It shows us that simply connecting through roads, without taking into account history, different cultures, and local visions of development, is not enough to achieve the long-awaited development."—Cesar Gamboa, executive director of Law, Environment, and Natural Resources, a nonprofit in the Peruvian Amazon

"This is a very timely and, in some ways, timeless subject of the post-industrial era. . . . It is an extraordinary undertaking, tracing five centuries of policies, programs, people, paradigms, and projects."—Amanda Stronza, professor of ecology and conservation biology at Texas A&M University and co-founder and director of the Amazon Field School, Peru

The Interoceanic Highway is many things to many people: an emblematic project during a period focused on integration, a dream realized for an isolated region, a symbol of the profound fragility of state institutions, a key cause of political corruption, and a major driver of ecological and cultural devastation. This highway links the Andean highlands with the Amazonian lowlands in southern Peru, offering an outlet for Brazil's emergent economy. While it finally brought an end to the isolation of Madre de Dios and other parts of southern Peru and the western Amazon, it was made possible by political corruption revealed in the Lava Jato scandal, and it permitted the spread of criminal business activities. But the Interoceanic Highway's deeper history must be appreciated in order to fully understand why it was built and the impacts it has generated.

The Road to the Land of the Mother of God explores more than five hundred years of the history of Peru's Interoceanic Highway, showing how the purposes, portrayals, and importance of roads change fundamentally over time, and thus how roads bring significantly more impacts and costs than their advocates and critics generally anticipate. By taking a deeper look at infrastructure history, Stephen G. Perz and Jorge Luis Castillo Hurtado portray infrastructure as an integrative optic for understanding changes in local livelihoods, regional development, and social conflicts.

Stephen G. Perz is a professor of sociology at the University of Florida and the author of *Crossing Boundaries for Collaboration: Conservation and Development Projects in the Amazon*. **Jorge Luis Castillo Hurtado** is a professor at Madre de Dios National University and former dean of the Faculty of Ecotourism in Peru.



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