

ditions of life for urbanized Latin Americans, but one can hardly be optimistic.

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A Mexican Family Empire: The Latifundio of the Sánchez Navarro Family, 1765–1867. By CHARLES H. HARRIS, III. Austin, 1975. University of Texas Press. Map. Notes. Tables. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xvii, 410. Cloth.

This book is a case study of what may be the major socioeconomic institution in Latin America, the large landed estate. It is also a history of the dramatic rise and fall of one of Mexico's great families. The Sánchez Navarros of Coahuila emerged from modest circumstances in the 1760s to control in the 1840s over 25,000 square miles of land, the largest latifundio in Latin America. The book is careful, detailed, and comprehensive, resting principally on the rich and extensive Sánchez Navarro papers at the University of Texas. It is an exhaustive treatment of the family's activities over a century, presented as six topics (chapters): The Family and the Land; Ranching; Labor; Latifundio Production; Commerce; Politics.

The author argues that the success of the Sánchez Navarros came from a combination of circumstances. First, there was the close personal management of lands and enterprises by two family patriarchs, Friar José Miguel (d. 1821) and José Melchor (d. 1836), and later the brothers Jacobo and Carlos, who effectively divided responsibilities and brought the empire to its height. Second, success came from pursuing a combination of commerce and ranching. The Sánchez Navarros were entrepreneurs as well as landowners and controlled liquid assets that carried them through hard times such as the wars for independence, when markets for sheep and wool were disrupted. Their economic flexibility ultimately allowed them to absorb properties of less diversified rival hacendados, such as the Marqués de Aguayo. Third, they were politically canny and followed a pragmatic course, using their immense regional and considerable national influence to further their economic interests, while emerging unscathed from the dangerous political crosscurrents of the years 1810 to 1854. They could not escape the intense ideological conflict of 1855 to 1867, however, and ultimately gambled on the loser. The family not only supported Maximilian, but Carlos Sánchez Navarro served as

Grand Chamberlain during the last days of the Empire. The liberals, triumphant in the North in 1866–67, confiscated and dispersed the properties of the family. (One might add, incidentally, that the family has reemerged phoenix-like since the Revolution to a place of eminence, recreating the lordly style of old, as the author described it brilliantly to this reviewer in a letter ten years ago.)

The value of this book as both a family study and a latifundio study is considerable. What could be its exceptional impact, however, is diminished by organizational and conceptual weaknesses. The author divides the subject into two parts, the “Colonial Period” (to 1821) and the “National Period”; and within each part he treats the six aforementioned topics, which make up the book’s twelve chapters. The author himself raises the question whether such periodization along lines of national politics is justified, and seems to answer it in the negative. His organizational scheme leads to an artificial separation of topics (such as ranching and commerce) that if treated together would lend strength to his general argument. This rigid separation of topics also undercuts the sense of continuity and change. As Harris himself suggests, the economic activities of the family experienced no fundamental change at independence, despite the dislocations of the war years and the coincidental death of José Miguel in 1821. Nor did the labor system change, although peonage became more harsh and impersonal after independence.

The broader problem is one of focus. The author has combined what could be two studies, the rise and fall of a great family, and an examination of their latifundio as a socioeconomic institution. The two objectives might perhaps be successfully combined, but the problems of doing so are great, as Harris seems to sense. The first objective lends itself to narrative treatment, and is a fascinating and dramatic saga, focusing ultimately on the family’s political ties. As Harris says, “politics played the decisive role in the Sánchez Navarros’ affairs after independence” (p. 271). The family history with its ties to politics is subverted by the topical approach of Part II, in which we learn in each chapter one aspect or other of the family’s ultimate collapse. The result is that by Chapter 12 (“Politics”), much of the tale is already told.

The second objective lends itself to analysis and comparison, locating the Sánchez Navarro latifundio within a broader Mexican typology. Yet because each socioeconomic topic is separated from the others and dealt with in a descriptive and narrative fashion with a minimum of analysis, the unique aspects of what might be called the

Sánchez Navarro “system” do not emerge in the body of the work. The author generalizes and poses questions for analysis only very briefly in a four-page conclusion. His questions are good ones, and they do help clarify how the Sánchez Navarro enterprise differed from stereotypes commonly held about Mexican latifundia. However, they might have been further developed and presented as hypotheses in the introduction to the work. In this way the author could have used his questions more directly as a guide to organization and analysis.

It must be recognized that these problems of organization and conceptualization are awesome. Moreover, despite its defects, Harris’ study of this unique family empire provides us valuable insight into numerous aspects of Mexico’s history, both socioeconomic and political, regional and national. We await his forthcoming work on the Terrazas of Chihuahua, a post-1867 family that he can profitably compare with the Sánchez Navarros.

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BACKGROUND

Introduction to Classical Nahuatl. By J. RICHARD ANDREWS. Austin, 1975. University of Texas Press. Tables. Appendices. Vocabulary. Index. Pp. xiv, 502. Cloth. \$39.50.

Introduction to Classical Nahuatl: Workbook. By J. RICHARD ANDREWS. Austin, 1975. University of Texas Press. Pp. ix, 222. Paper. \$14.95.

Grato es comprobar el mayor desarrollo que cada día tienen los estudios relacionados con la lengua náhuatl. Así, en los Estados Unidos—además de las valiosas aportaciones sobre el *Códice Florentino*, debidas a Arthur J. O. Anderson y Charles E. Dibble—varios trabajos recientes merecen especial mención. Citaré el estudio de lingüística descriptiva acerca del náhuatl clásico por Stanley Newman, incluido en el volumen 5 del *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, 1967. Recordaré asimismo las *Rules of the Aztec Language*, adaptación hecha por Arthur J. O. Anderson de un ensayo de Francisco Xavier Clavigero, 1973.

Obra más reciente en este campo, es la del profesor J. Richard Andrews, *Introduction to Classical Nahuatl*, acompañada de un *Workbook*, aparecidos uno y otro en 1975. El propio autor describe en su prefacio cuáles fueron los propósitos que guiaron la preparación de