

confined to English and Spanish sources inevitably omits some items of importance. Placing a bibliographical list of works in English at the conclusion of each chapter involves unnecessarily awkward problems of selection, omission, and repetition, and I think that one or more annotated, critical bibliographies would have been preferable. Moreover, the present bibliographical lists should receive a thorough reexamination for accuracy.

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*Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío: León, 1700–1860.* By D. A. BRADING. New York, 1979. Cambridge University Press. Tables. Graphs. Maps. Illustrations. Glossary. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xviii, 258. Cloth. \$29.50.

It is refreshing to read a book whose title accurately reflects its contents. Although several recent studies have explored various aspects of the hacienda and the Mexican countryside, none have yielded an integrated analysis of rural development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Professor Brading's new work, nine years in the making, admirably remedies this deficiency for one of Mexico's most important agricultural regions.

As with his previous book, Professor Brading has culled the diverse documents of a number of local archives in the Mexican Bajío and has assembled an impressive array of data and information. But it is not only thorough research that distinguishes this book. A great deal of thought and insight renders the data intelligible and further transforms it into valuable and provocative conclusions. Thus we learn in a detailed chapter on population that contrary to other well studied regions of Mexico, there was no demographic crisis in the Bajío in the late eighteenth century. Citing the stagnation of Mesoamerica and the vitality of the frontier zones, Brading suggests strong regional and ethnic differentiation in population growth and economic prosperity. Indeed, one of the services of this book is to remind the reader that Mexico was, and is, in fact "many Mexicos."

In addressing the questions of land tenure and the structure of agricultural production, Professor Brading succeeds in unraveling the complexities of the rural Bajío. Far from being static, the countryside existed in a state of flux marked by a relatively rapid turnover of properties. And at the same time that ambitious landowners created

large haciendas from minifundia, other landlords and heirs saw their estates divided by testamentary inheritance or parceled for cash. Despite the changing nature of the countryside, the full-scale entry of mercantile and mining capital in the middle decades of the eighteenth century gradually encouraged the formation of more haciendas. Surprisingly, these haciendas were not created at the expense of town lands, but more commonly resulted from the purchase of several contiguous mid-sized farms (*labores*). Brading finds that arrangements for working hacienda land were often as transitional as its tenure. The practice of renting land grew in the eighteenth century as land values rose, while the destruction of many haciendas and widespread loss of capital during the wars of independence ushered in sharecropping. Amid the seemingly dominant haciendas, Professor Brading discovers a numerous group of smallholders (*rancheros*) who survived the vicissitudes of the period. Thanks to the rising value of land and an increase of population, the economic position of *rancheros* gradually deteriorated despite the rise in maize prices. In addition, Brading identifies a structure of production which persists to this day: large-scale commercial haciendas profitably grew wheat while *rancheros* and tenant farmers engaged in more risky maize production.

Perhaps the most stimulating part of this study lies outside the chronological bounds of its title. In an epilogue on agrarian reform, 1919–1940, Professor Brading argues that by 1910, the large estate in the Bajío may have been destined for eventual dissolution regardless of the outcome of the Revolution. Many haciendas, already mainly worked by tenants and sharecroppers, were relatively painlessly parceled and sold to small farmers and thus avoided expropriation in the 1930s. It was these small proprietors along with existing *rancheros* who benefited most from land redistribution. When demand for foodstuffs increased with population, capital investment on private lands rose, and capital-poor *ejidos* were relegated to mere suppliers of seasonal labor.

In short, these are but a few of the many significant findings in this book. If a criticism is to be leveled, it would only be the unfortunate lack of private account books available to the author. Consequently, Professor Brading's treatment of labor is not as complete as his other analyses. Although access to such account books may alter some conclusions, this study is bound to remain essential reading for anyone concerned with change in Mexico.

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