where the documents end and his own exegesis begins. At times, the text is difficult to follow because it is simply not well written; whether that is the fault of the original or of the translation is hard to judge. It is, however, useful to have a study of the nonconforming elements of a society as well as of the socially acceptable, since it serves to define the parameters of the society.

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This handsomely produced study of the livestock operations of the Cortés estate in the province of Tehuantepec in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries advances our knowledge of the complex, often interlocking economic activities of the huge marquesado, whose constituent parts comprised some of the choicest regions of New Spain. The Tehuantepec properties were under direct estate administration during the 1580–1620 livestock boom in the area, and Brockington uses the resulting accounts to sketch the modestly profitable role of the haciendas marquesanas in providing other estate operations with livestock, for both internal use and resale elsewhere in the colony, and in periodically shipping hides to Spain. After 1620, however, the haciendas were leased to others, estate administration was reduced to little more than squabbles with leaseholders, and Brockington’s account trails off in confused fashion, punctuated by the odd bit of data from the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. This unclear and incomplete record leaves the impression of both economic stagnation and neglect.

In part two, Brockington provides us with a detailed account of hacienda labor and management during the boom decades. In the late sixteenth century, the Tehuantepec operations relied on a core slave-labor force, supplemented by resident and nonresident Indian and mulatto vaqueros and by occasional repartimiento drafts. To control costs, positions of supervision and trust below the rank of majordomo were filled by slaves and free mulattos, and Brockington provides satisfying detail on slave life, including several mini-biographies. When the original slaves began to die after 1615, their places in the labor pool were taken either by local Indians or, more often, by mulattos (both slave and, increasingly, free). At least during the period of direct estate administration, debt was shunned as a labor-procurement device. My enthusiasm for Brockington’s admirable research is considerably diluted by her penchant for dubious comparisons, wrenched out of time and context and based on limited data, between the Tehuantepec haciendas marquesanas and livestock operations elsewhere in the colony, most notably the Jesuits’ Santa Lucía.

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