

Ruwet relates the convoluted and fascinating history of this unusual manuscript collection and provides information on its other manuscripts, including, among other things, the *Crónica mexicáyotl*.

Andrea Martínez Baracs contributes a sharply focused critical essay that clarifies the origin and dating of the manuscript and points out some of its more interesting and valuable features. Dated to 1588–89, the orthography of the *Suma y epíloga* matches that of the great Tlaxcalan chronicler Diego Muñoz Camargo; and Martínez cautiously concludes that the author of the *Suma y epíloga* and the author of the *Historia de Tlaxcala* and the *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala* are one and the same.

As Martínez explains, the *Suma y epíloga* appears to be the second part of a draft version of a *relación geográfica* of Tlaxcala. The manuscript is missing its final section, but Martínez believes that this loss is relatively insignificant. Martínez poses an intriguing mystery in observing that the *Suma y epíloga* does not follow the 1577 questionnaire of the *relaciones geográficas*, and although the author refers to an *instrucción* to which he responded, its origin and nature remain uncertain. Nevertheless, Martínez avers, the *Suma y epíloga*, in the way it follows a prepared set of questions, appears to be much more like a *relación geográfica* than the *Descripción*.

As for content, the *Suma y epíloga* presents a richly textured picture of Tlaxcala in the late sixteenth century. In addition to geographical descriptions, it includes detailed data on economic production and a great deal of social and political information on both native and Spanish inhabitants. Especially interesting is the list of Spanish vecinos of the province, their occupations, and their economic activities. Churches, monasteries, and religious activity also receive fairly detailed description and commentary. In addition, the document is laced with interesting tidbits on a wide range of topics.

The *Suma y epíloga* will be most useful, of course, to scholars working on sixteenth-century central Mexico; but all specialists in colonial Latin America will profit from the study of this source.

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*Cuatro nobles titulados en contienda por la tierra*. By GONZALO AGUIRRE BELTRÁN. Mexico City: CIESAS, 1995. Tables. Bibliography. 256 pp. Paper.

The four essays that comprise this book were originally published between 1987 and 1992. They are part and parcel of the author's longstanding and seminal contribution to the history of colonial Mexico. Here in particular, his goal is to document the appropriation of Indian land in the valley of Orizaba by the creole nobility and higher colonial bureaucracy. For this, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán studies the formation of the four aristocratic estates in Orizaba and their meandering ownership and succession.

Chapter 1 details the establishment of the county of Orizaba (1627). Its founder, Rodrigo de Vivero, and his heirs, owners of a sugarcane plantation based on slave

and Indian labor, are presented in excruciating detail. Chapter 2 deals with the marquesado del Valle de la Colina, founded by Diego Madrazo in 1690. The author shows how the tobacco monopoly (1765–1825) triggered a capitalist transformation, expressed in a regional economic boom that affected the noble elite, the productive process, and the social fabric of the local colonial and indigenous societies.

Chapter 3 chronicles the marquesado de Sierra Nevada, founded by Domingo Ruíz Tagle in 1708; and chapter 4 deals with the marquesado de Selva Nevada, entailed by Antonia Gómez and Manuel Rodríguez in 1778. These chapters highlight the conflicts between the landed aristocracy and the local elites and emerging social forces of Orizaba (enlightened hidalgos, merchants, planters, provincial bureaucrats). The latter masterfully describes the judicial maneuvering of the Indian communities involved in secular struggles aimed at recovering their ancestral lands. This is exemplified by the tangled and mutually exhausting dispute between the marquesses of Selva Nevada—who inherited the controversy from the Jesuits—and the Indian town of Zongolica. Overall, however, this portrayal of indigenous communities as dynamic and engaged historical agents is an exception. Aguirre's elite-centered approach depicts Indians and slaves as lacking historical agency. While chapter 1 treats nobles in awesome detail, Indians and slaves are mentioned only briefly, and they quickly disappear from the picture. Chapters 2 and 3 treat both groups mainly as a passive labor force.

This text is a reaction against “detached” writings in social and economic history, which privilege trends, variables, and patterns at the expense of the eventful biographies of the people involved in their own saga. But this volume falls short in the endeavor of evenly mastering biography and historical process. Endless vignettes of aristocrats veil the central argument, and are weakly connected to the region's social and economic processes. The absence of footnotes makes the text even more convoluted. One gets the sense of standing in front of bundles of rich archival records not yet subject to the distillation that transforms legajos into history.

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*Eine Elite im Umbruch: der Stadtrat von Mexiko zwischen kolonialer Ordnung und unabhängigem Staat, 1761–1821.* By JOCHEN MEISSNER. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1993. Photographs. Maps. Tables. Figures. Chronology. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 424 pp. Paper.

Jochen Meissner fills a gap in Mexican historiography for the otherwise well-researched independence period by looking at issues that confronted the viceroy, the audiencia, and the cabildo in New Spain's capital city over the last 40 years of colonial rule. His analysis does not start or end with Hidalgo and Morelos. It is essentially a study geared to understanding how the cabildo built an increasingly radical political discourse, based on its changing composition and responding to the viceroy, the audiencia, and events in Spain.