

tential are a second theme dealt with in several papers. Again this is an issue Watanabe identified some years ago, in a paper that is reprinted here. All these studies come to the conclusion that vigorous skilled workers are more proficient than their young unskilled or aged counterparts. This conclusion is hardly counterintuitive, but the studies now give it explicit substantiation.

The group most likely to find *Human Activity System* useful and interesting is "ethnoarcheologists" who realize that an understanding of the archeological record requires in-depth knowledge of primitive artifacts and technical knowledge. Their goals are unlike those of Watanabe and his colleagues, but they will find the data and techniques presented in these papers worthy of study.

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Oaxacans

The Zapotecs. Princes, Priests, and Peasants. JOSEPH W. WHITCOTTON. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1977. xiv, 338 pp., illus. \$14.95. The Civilization of the American Indian Series.

Joseph Whitemcotton has undertaken the ambitious task of providing a coherent culture history of the Zapotecs of Oaxaca, south central Mexico. The book is the first comprehensive culture history of the Zapotecs in the English language and a worthy successor and companion to the collection of papers entitled *Los Zapotecos*, edited by Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez, which appeared in 1949.

The book reflects the approach of Mexican "anthropological history," wherein all types of data—archeological, historical, ethnographic, and linguistic—are utilized. The author has relied on several dozen modern studies, in particular the researches of Oaxacanists Alfonso Caso, Wigberto Jiménez Moreno, Ignacio Bernal, and John Paddock, as well as numerous published documents, among them native pictographic manuscripts, the geographical *relaciones* commissioned by King Phillip and completed between 1579 and 1581, the great Cordova *Vocabulario* of 16th-century Zapotec, and the *Geográfica descripción* of Fray Francisco de Burgoa. He has made little use of unpublished material. The book is more a synthesis of existing studies than a marshaling of new evidence or a new analysis or reinterpretation of the evolution of Zapotec culture.

The story begins about 1000 B.C., in

the Formative period, and concludes with a brief consideration of the Zapotec as modern Mexican peasants. The first two chapters deal with the early settlement and origins of agriculture in the Oaxaca Valley and with the Classic period of state building and urbanization. The Classic period was the time of the florescence of Monte Albán, and the author discusses what can be inferred about the social and political organization of that center. The Post-Classic period, when Monte Albán was abandoned and smaller communities and towns proliferated in the valley, is then considered, with sections on documentary sources, Mixtec-Zapotec relations in the valley, the Aztec conquest of the valley, and the Zapotec tributary state. This is followed by a detailed chapter, probably the best and most useful part of the book for the social anthropologist, on Zapotec social organization on the eve of the Spanish conquest. This chapter contains the best description of the Prehispanic Zapotec class system available in any language. Religion is briefly considered.

In the chapter "Zapotec elites and peasants in New Spain" Posthispanic developments in technology, population, the cacique class, local political organization, colonial administration, land tenure, tribute and labor, and church organization are considered. Unfortunately, the attention given to social organization in Prehispanic times is not matched in the account of the Colonial period. Rather, the author presents an all too brief account derived from the Oaxaca studies of William Taylor and the more generalized historical works of Charles Gibson and François Chevalier and makes little or no use of the abundant archival resources from Mexico and Spain that would shed light on such topics as class structure, intergroup relations, marketing and trade networks, multi-level political organization, and law.

The concluding chapter, "The Zapotecs in modern Mexico," is overly brief and overly general and places too much emphasis on events and rhetoric from the national political scene during the 19th century. The reader is left with the impression that nothing much happened in Oaxaca or that as the nation went so went Oaxaca. A lot did, in fact, happen in Oaxaca in the 19th century. It was the most important period of reformulation of Oaxaca society since the decades immediately following the Spanish conquest and was a truly formative period for modern Zapotec society and local and regional economic development. To deal with the tumultuous and climactic period from 1800 to 1930 by brief refer-

ences to La Reforma, the pronouncements of Benito Juárez, the deeds of Porfirio Díaz, or the "social movement" ideology of the early-20th-century Revolution (much of it ex post facto) simply does not do justice to the intricate dynamics of social change in Oaxaca during those momentous years. In this, however, the author is simply following accepted practice in the anthropological literature of Mexico.

I would have preferred that the author take a stand on some of the existing controversies, that he examine fresh documentary sources, that he get involved in the archeology of the area, that he do extended ethnographic research in Oaxaca, that he examine such topics as evolving patterns of social stratification, multi-level politics, intergroup relations, trade, ceremonialism, or ideology—in short, that he move us beyond our present state of knowledge and understanding of this great, dynamic, and adaptively persistent culture. But the requirements of a single reviewer do not reflect the needs of the world at large. *The Zapotecs* is a fine book for most readers with an interest in Mexican, Oaxacan, and Zapotec culture history. It is well written, well documented, well illustrated, and, as has come to be expected of University of Oklahoma Press books on American Indians, beautifully produced. It can be recommended for classroom use, and it stands as an example of the kind of long-term or regional culture history that anthropologists and historians should be doing. One hopes it will provide impetus for regional and local culture histories for other areas of Mexico and Latin America and elsewhere.

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A Region of Recent Interest

Nubia under the Pharaohs. BRUCE G. TRIGGER. Westview Press, Boulder, Colo., 1976. 216 pp., illus. \$18.75. Ancient Peoples and Places, vol. 85.

Nubia: Corridor to Africa. WILLIAM Y. ADAMS. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1977. xxvi, 798 pp., illus. + plates. \$35.

Neither fully Mediterranean nor African in its geography, culture, or ethnic relationship and only occasionally independent of strong outside influences, Nubia—that land lying above Aswan and extending southward along the Nile to the Fourth Cataract in the Sudan—has