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*The Mexican Mesta; the Administration of  
Ranching in Colonial Mexico*

By William H. Dusenberry. University of Illinois  
Press, Urbana. 253 pages. \$5.50.

**R**ANCHING in the United States has been greatly influenced by Spanish-American ranching practices. An important Spanish-American ranching institution, the Mesta, described by Dusenberry in this book, which won the Agricultural History Society Book Award for 1962. His emphasis is on the early years of the Mexican Mesta, an administrative livestock organization introduced from Spain in 1537 and terminated in 1812. All large ranchers were members of the Mesta. The organization regulated ranching affairs and handled disputes concerning livestock. Many detailed examples of disputes and their settlement are listed.

The author has done an excellent job of gathering information, largely from Mexican archives, on an important agricultural institution. He makes clear that the Mesta was created and controlled by the colonial government. In addition, emphasis is given to governmental response to reports of violations of regulations. However, less attention is given to the character of the Mesta itself or to the role of its members in the organization. There are several chapters on the administration of Mesta regulations, but only one on the organization of the Mexican Mesta. A more equal balance would have made the study more informative to the nonspecialist.

Readers who want background information on ranching in the United States will find much that is valuable in the chapter on the influence of the Mesta on later institutions. The Mesta code is the source of many ranching laws, customs, and association rules in the western United States. The necessity of honest and efficient service at all levels of government is shown by the administrative difficulties of enforcing the Mesta code. The original code of 1537 is reprinted in Spanish in an appendix. Illustrations of 118 brands registered in 16th-century Mexico City will interest many people.

*Earl M. Rogers*