

M. ARTOLA (Ed.). *El latifundio. Propiedad y explotación, ss xviii-xx*. (Madrid: Ministerio de Agricultura. 1978. Pp. 197. 3 maps. Paperback, n.p.)

This book consists of three short contributions from a research team working under the direction of Miguel Artola and attempts to show the changing nature of the *latifundio* in Andalusia from the *ancien régime* of the eighteenth century to the capitalist society of the present day. Although the *latifundio* has been recognized as a major factor for the poor economic performance of southern Spain for well over a century, there has been little research done into either its extent, or to assess its organization in a changing political and economic environment.

Artola, using the Catastro de Ensenada of c. 1752, shows the numerical importance of the nobility in land ownership in the region compared to the crown and the church, and then attempts some estimation of the degree of land concentration in their hands. Jaime Contreras, examining the estate papers of the Duke of Osuna shows for a slightly earlier period that 90 per cent of all land was leased, usually in substantial units, and only for a period of four years. According to Bernal, the third contributor, a similar percentage today work their own estates, and this is the result of the slow change in the structure of the *latifundio* with the growth of specialized crops, such as the olive, and the decline of the fallow. Interestingly, the size of the *latifundio* seems to have remained remarkably stable during the nineteenth-century liberal reforms, but increased slightly during the first quarter of the present century, coinciding with the rise of political agitation in the region.

Although we must wait until a great deal more research is done on the Andalusian *latifundio* before we can be sure that the sample of estates examined in this book is representative, it is a stimulating work and a useful addition to the growing body of literature on Spanish economic history.

*London School of Economics*

JAMES SIMPSON