

From this book, scholars should pay closer attention to the ways that *casta*, *calidad*, and *clase*, all topics raised here, intersect, but are also different. We cannot conflate these in practice, because although closely related, they meant different things, and it is important to be precise about them. Otherwise, we risk reducing these, and other Latin American experiences, to processes more historically linked to US experiences. The scholarship on Afro-Mexicans, for its part, has depicted during the last decades a complex picture of the identities of *negros*, *mulatos*, *moriscos*, *lobos*, *chinos*, *pardos*, and *morenos* in New Spain. Gharala adds one more element to this multifaceted portrait: that of the tributary subject.

Despite these contributions, however, the author is at times imprecise in her approach to the colonial-era language of difference. There is also a lack of clarity in the use of blackness and tributary status. In turn, this blurs the book's conclusions. Furthermore, the author's claims about the inflexibility and unchangeable nature of social labels linked to blackness are puzzling and run counter to the findings of a number of other studies that engage social differentiation and Afro-Mexican identity during this period. Nonetheless, the author should be praised for debunking the stereotypes about the *mulatos vagos* and for reconstructing the history of Afro-Mexican communities.

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## CASTE WAR

*Violence and the Caste War of Yucatán*. By Wolfgang Gabbert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 342. \$120.00 cloth.  
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Combining rigorous historical scholarship with theoretical insights from anthropology and sociology, Wolfgang Gabbert's latest monograph undoubtedly ranks, along with the works of Terry Rugeley and Don Dumond, among the most comprehensive and balanced treatments of Yucatán's Caste War. Unlike Rugeley and Dumond though, Gabbert is mainly concerned with examining the question of violence in the conflict, which although it seems to be of obvious importance has still not received exhaustive scholarly treatment. The Caste War has often been characterized as a race war between Indians and non-Indians. Gabbert, however, convincingly shows that the conflict was far more complex, defying any single categorization. Another important contribution is his effort to contextualize violence and identify patterns, motivations, and structural factors to explain seemingly irrational or chaotic acts of violence.

An outstanding feature of Gabbert's narrative is his handling of a wide range of sources to shed light on noncombatants, particularly in the buffer zones, and the role of lower classes

in the broader Yucatecan society. Gabbert conveys convincingly the effect of the war in the buffer zones, where communities faced looting, kidnapping, murder, and other forms of violence. Rather than seeing them as inevitable fallouts of an all-out war, Gabbert shows the strategic and political reasons behind these acts of violence. Whether captives were taken alive or slaughtered for instance, he suggests, stemmed from the aims and objectives of the contending parties within specific historical contexts. Gabbert's contextualization of the Caste War also illuminates the travails of the lower classes in mid nineteenth-century Yucatán, where limited access to land, exploitation on haciendas, and mobilization as combatants in the peninsula's civil wars primed them to become the mainstay of the warring factions.

Although the Caste War is often regarded as a singular episode in Yucatecan history, Gabbert shows that its features were far from unique. He finds evidence, for instance, of a longer tradition of syncretic religion that suggests that the cult of the Speaking Cross was not peculiar to the Caste War. Gabbert also uses the concept of caudillo politics to explain Kruso's political structure and actions. Although Caste War studies on the rebel Maya have consistently focused on the rebel leaders, Gabbert's work offers a retelling that also gives agency to the rank-and-file, who sometimes altered "the target during expeditions" (267). Another important contribution is understanding the fissures within the rebel movement—between *pacíficos* and *bravos*, among rebel leaders, and between leaders and rank-and-file.

Gabbert also addresses the economic, social, and political reasons for the prolongation of the conflict, one of the most protracted in Latin American history. Thus, as the conflict moved into the eastern part of the peninsula and the frontier regions, Gabbert suggests that the Yucatecan government stopped seeing it as an immediate threat. Besides, the wider instability of the peninsula prevented a concerted attempt to bring an end to the conflict. Gabbert also rightly points to the role of Belize in prolonging the war and to other factors such as the violence exercised by government forces on captured rebels that added to Kruso's reluctance to surrender. Finally, this narrative puts a human face on a conflict in which actors were often demonized by the contending parties. Gabbert's balanced narrative shows the travails of the poor soldiers who suffered from lack of food, water, and clothing and were not paid, as he highlights the harsh living conditions on the rebel side.

This book will appeal to a wide audience—not only Caste War scholars, but also students and researchers interested in the history and sociology of violence. Several excellent tables and a very useful appendix provide future researchers with springboards to more focused research on specific aspects of Yucatán's Caste War.

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