The following review appeared in the May 2014 issue of CHOICE:


Mining played a primary role in the growth of California. While most mining histories have centered on gold, this study reveals that the operation and legacy of mining are deeper and more far-reaching than is commonly understood. Mercury mining was not only less celebrated than gold mining, but was also more capital- and process-intensive, and had more opportunity to influence cultural, labor, and political attitudes and policies. Drawing from an array of primary and archival sources, Johnston (architecture, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool Univ., China) has produced an interesting and discerning study that adds to an understanding of the development of the American West. The author demonstrates that the now largely overlooked industrialized mercury mining operations of 19th-century California have something to say about such far-reaching issues as technology, immigration and labor relations, and race and ethnicity, as well as legal precedents and court rulings. Even though this volume focuses on a narrow subject, it nevertheless exposes a layer of complexity to the process and interdependency of social, cultural, and political development, which is not always fully appreciated. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Upper-division undergraduate and graduate students; researchers; faculty. — T. E. Sullivan, Towson University