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## Kris E. Lane, Quito 1599: City and Colony in Transition

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which provides the correct date. Individually, none of these errors is crucial, but cumulatively they are inauspicious for the success of her argument by exposing a certain lack of care in using and interpreting her sources.

This book was reviewed during the SARS scare, which reminds us that diseases, whether or not they are epidemics, do indeed affect us frequently and sometimes catastrophically. Alchon's overall argument, enhanced by the departure from her earlier work, is definitely a move in the right direction, since historical processes are seldom, if ever, monocausal, and imbalances in the recent study of the history of disease need correcting. Required now is further work that avoids numbers entirely unless they can be incontrovertibly documented, that provides contextual definitions for key concepts, and that mines the vast comparative historical record more convincingly.

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*Quito 1599: City and Colony in Transition.* By Kris E. Lane. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002. xix + 292 pp. Illustrations, maps, charts, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 cloth, \$21.95 paper.)

The year 1599 was not, as this title may suggest, a particularly memorable date in Ecuadorian history. Rather, it was the year in which the famous painting of the *Mulattoes* of coastal Ecuador was produced under commission from an *oidor* of the Audiencia de Quito for the coronation of Philip III. The painting shows the *Mulattoes* displaying items as diverse as starched ruffs, nose rings, wooden lances, and velvet hats, thereby raising questions about the mentalities of those being depicted and the artist. The painting acts as a touchstone for the book, for, despite its title, it does not aim to provide a snapshot of the city of Quito and its region in 1599, but rather seeks to explore some of the views that individuals held at the time. In this way, the author hopes to achieve a better understanding of how the seeds of colonial legacies were planted.

The book is structured around six overlapping narratives centered around the themes of human captivity and the lust for gold, which the author regards as the central pillars of life in the city and colony of Quito. These themes are broad, especially since they are interpreted metaphorically as well as literally. Making reference to the painting, the book begins by considering the nature of colonial contacts on the Pacific, then takes up the theme of captivity and redemption in examining African slaves in the city of Quito. Staying

in the highlands, the third narrative explores adaptations to colonial life in the sierra, then goes on to look at the search for gold and the responses of indigenous groups in the lowlands to Spanish incursions into their territories. The theme of the search for gold is then continued by examining the diverse activities in which *quiteños* sought wealth, most notably through trade. Finally, the sixth narrative returns to the coast, exploring the bellicose relations that existed not only between Spaniards and indigenous peoples but also among pirates.

Each narrative consists of several vignettes. Unfortunately, the links between them are not always apparent except in that they relate to a specific region. This is especially true of the last narrative, which considers pirates, soldiers, and cannibals. Why are the aspirations of soldiers considered here rather than elsewhere? A little more justification for the selection of the narratives might have also helped the coherence of some of the chapters. That said, the book largely achieves its ambitious aims. Fully aware of the limitations of attempting to view the past through the eyes of those at the time, the author tries to develop a subaltern view of the aspirations and life experiences of individuals in the Audiencia de Quito at the end of the sixteenth century. The author's approach is to center each narrative on the life of particular individuals, using letters, wills, and other sources. Hence, the study makes extensive use of quotations and introduces each section with a transcribed letter in which personal experiences are related. Lane uses this method particularly successfully in his discussion of traders and African slaves, where he makes excellent use of notarial records. The book is also enlivened by the extensive use of photographs and illustrations, though the quality of some is a bit disappointing.

A number of books exist on early-colonial Ecuador that cover a number of issues discussed in this study, and, in fact, they provide a context for it. This book adopts a different perspective and adds flesh to the histories already delineated, and is therefore a welcome addition to the literature. It is beautifully written and often thought provoking. It shows, as Lane concludes, the common incongruity between the complex paths of human lives and the major currents of history.

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