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Shaky Colonialism: The 1746 Earthquake-Tsunami in Lima, Peru, and Its Long Aftermath

Kris Lane
William & Mary

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CHARLES F. WALKER. *Shaky Colonialism: The 1746 Earthquake-Tsunami in Lima, Peru, and Its Long Aftermath*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. 2008. Pp. xiii, 260. Paper \$22.95, cloth \$79.95.

Charles F. Walker, whose previous work has bridged the late colonial and early national periods in Peruvian history, here steps back to bridge the Baroque/Enlightenment divide of the mid-eighteenth century. Whereas the transition from regional rebellion to national revolution took a century, the Peruvian Baroque, or at least Lima's, seems to have ended in only minutes, on the night of October 28, 1746. At 10:30 P.M. a massive earthquake tore down two centuries of viceregal grandeur in the city center, and a half hour later an equally astonishing tsunami erased the nearby port of Callao. As many as 16,000 of Lima's 60,000 or so inhabitants perished, many crushed by fallen tamped-earth and adobe walls and many others felled by untended injuries, sickness, malnutrition, and other post-quake maladies. Only about 100 of Callao's 5,000-odd inhabitants escaped alive, some cast ashore days later on logs and planks.

Rather like hurricanes in the Caribbean, earthquakes were a more or less frequent hazard in Spanish America's many and populous Pacific Rim colonies. As in southern Italy, also a Spanish colony at this time, they came with the territory. (By contrast, Lisbon's 1755 earthquake, which Lima's presaged in spawning an Enlightenment rebuilding project, occurred in a zone not known for violent tremors.) Frequent or not, seismic events were, for the most part, not understood in any scientific way prior to the late eighteenth century. Since the days of the conquistadors, quakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, floods, droughts, blights, and disease epidemics—and even pirate attacks—were typically understood as acts of God rather than acts of impersonal nature. People, as to be expected in an androcentric universe, were to blame. As Walker amply demonstrates, in Baroque Spanish America disasters of all kinds were understood to be cyclical divine punishments, pent-up releases of God's wrath for the accumulated sins of his wayward creation, Sodom and Gomorrah teaching moments.

What makes the 1746 Lima earthquake worth a book, aside from the fact that it remains the city's Big One, is that it straddled the Baroque/Enlightenment gap in several key ways. One was scientific, in the sense of how the event itself was to be explained, but those who speculated on subterranean fluids making the earth slip or underground fires causing bits of it to collapse were by far in the minority. Baroque religious explanations won out, and these Walker examines in detail. They had to do mostly with impiety among servants of the church, people of color, and women in general. Lima, everyone seemed to agree, was "sin city." Especially scandalous, according to several of Lima's thousands of nuns who allegedly foresaw the great *terremoto*, were flirtatious women. The dark *sayas* and *mantas* worn by Lima's mul-tihued women were no burkhas, and priests and foreign

visitors alike seemed to agree that female freedom in matters of love and lust was remarkable.

Walker starts with a gripping description of the disaster itself, then devotes short chapters to pious premonitions, Lima's urban form and demography before and after the disaster, disputed claims of loss and a vice-roy's attempt to take charge, failed French-inspired fixes, church scandals and finances, women's public behavior, and poor and indigenous rumblings and uprisings. The heart of the book is not so much the earthquake but rather the "long aftermath" of the subtitle. This makes for somewhat uneven reading, if only because nothing, not even a potent indigenous uprising in the town of Huarochiri in 1750, quite compares with images of a fifty-foot-tall wave sweeping over Callao. Walker's thesis remains clear, however, and it is compelling: the 1746 earthquake and the manifold official and popular responses to it presaged the more famous Bourbon reforms and rebellions of subsequent decades.

Where Enlightenment sensibilities won out over Baroque ones after 1746, according to Walker, was in Spain's decision—the decision of the Bourbon king and his enlightened ministers—not to rebuild Lima as the seat of an adjunct kingdom but rather as the modest head of one of many subsidiary units of the newly centralizing Spanish empire. Lima was not only demolished, it was demoted; its lavish, Habsburg self was not to be resuscitated. Still, despite the tremendous scale of the catastrophe and the crown's attempts to use it for its own purposes, the church emerged less beaten down than Bourbon ministers would have liked, the indigenous and African-descended majority carried on with their raucous festivals, and the city's coquettish *tapadas* survived to enrapture local and foreign men for another century.

KRIS LANE
College of William and Mary

ALFONSO W. QUIROZ. *Corrupt Circles: A History of Unbound Graft in Peru*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center. 2008. Pp. xxii, 514. Cloth \$65.00, paper \$30.00.

This book is a monumental research achievement, based on an astonishing array of archival sources. As an interpretation of Peruvian history it has many virtues, not least its expansive two-century time frame, ranging from the end of the colonial era to the dawn of the twenty-first century. It links together a number of contributions that Alfonso W. Quiroz himself has made in his fruitful historical career. This is to my knowledge the only existing full-length monographic study of corruption for a Latin American republic, a region of the world marred by entrenched corruption of the state, so it is model work that will no doubt be emulated by other national historians and subject to studied comparisons with other cases. It will surely contribute to lively debates in Peru, where corruption is now a contentious public issue, and in global policy circles that have made efforts to combat corruption a centerpiece of developmental and political reform.