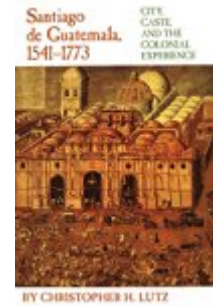


Christopher H. Lutz. *Santiago de Guatemala, 1541-1773: City, Caste and the Colonial Experience.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. xx + 346 pp. \$16.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8061-2911-2.



Reviewed by Richmond F. Brown

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Two recent essays in the *Latin American Research Review* offer an eloquent comment on and a concise index of the gap between studies of colonial Central America and the state of the art historiography of colonial Mexico. One can profitably compare not only the respective works under review in Matthew Restall's discussion of Central America (May 1998) and Susan Deans-Smith's essay on Mexico (January 1998), but also the tone of the reviews themselves, to realize that scholarship on colonial Central America has far to travel to reach the level of maturity or sophistication of its richer, more populous, and more "historiographically developed" neighbor. Not that this should be all that surprising. The army of scholars who have descended on Mexico from the United States, Canada, and Europe, not to mention those of Latin America and Mexico itself, dwarfs the modest band of investigators who have explored the Central American colonial past. This reflects not only the relative importance of the two regions in the Spanish era, but also the comparative level of interest from U.S. scholars since the days of Bolton, Simpson, and Borah, as well as the relative quality and accessibility of documentary re-

sources, and perhaps the relative comfort and safety of doing research in the two regions.

But, as such works as Murdo MacLeod's *Spanish Central America* and William Sherman's *Forced Native Labor* have shown, first rate work on colonial Central America has been and can be done. Christopher Lutz's study of *Santiago de Guatemala* approaches the quality of these earlier works and matches their importance. If it does not reflect all the concerns of or directly engage the most recent pathbreaking works on colonial Mexico, Lutz's work makes for useful comparison with studies like, say, R. Douglas Cope's *The Limits of Racial Domination* or Richard Boyer's *Lives of the Bigamists*.

Lutz's book features a relatively brief text (169 pages including some lengthy tables) and 86 pages of appendices. It is handsomely and even lavishly illustrated with 5 maps, 19 tables, 14 plates and a figure.

Santiago de Guatemala has an unusual publication history. It is a revised version of Lutz's 1976 Wisconsin dissertation directed by the late John Leddy Phelan. The book was published in a Span-

ish edition in Guatemala in 1982 and came out in a much revised English language hardcover edition in 1994 and in paperback in 1997. The questions it asks, the approach it adopts, and the theoretical and historiographical references it makes are largely a product of its genesis in the 1970s. If this perhaps dates the work, it renders its contributions all the more remarkable as a result.

Lutz meticulously traces the foundation of the city of Santiago de Guatemala in the Panchoy Valley (today Antigua) in 1541, the evolution of the town and its surrounding barrios, the economic connection between them, and how miscegenation changed those barrios and colonial Guatemalan society itself.

Lutz argues that it was possible for Santiago to preserve the semblance of two republics (Spaniards and Indians) in the early days. Mestizo offspring were readily absorbed into one or the other categories. But with the influx of African slaves and the expansion of the mulatto population in the mid-sixteenth century, this proved no longer possible. Guatemala moved from a segmented society to a multi-racial society. As elsewhere, miscegenation became a dominant theme in the history of colonial Santiago as free castas and other non-elites moved into Indian barrios and supplanted their commercial roles (often in a thriving blackmarket). Given the fact that even today Guatemala remains the most "Indian" of Latin American countries, one may be startled to learn that free mulattoes were Santiago's "largest single socioracial and status group by at least the second quarter of the eighteenth century" (p. 92).

Lutz's careful study of parish records gives much insight into residential, occupational and marriage patterns. Upward mobility for the free castas (in the marriage market among others) defused explosive ethnic pressures and endowed colonial Guatemala with a perhaps surprising stability. Among other contributions, Lutz offers a provocative discussion of crime and social control. Deliberately or not, the Spanish authorities

pursued a policy of divide and rule, encouraging inter- and intra-ethnic competition to deflect attacks on the dominant class (for example, in the employment of mulatto militias). Lutz helps clarify the nettlesome question of the evolution of the term "ladino." And he provides the best available estimates of the size, evolution and ethnic composition of the population of Central America's colonial capital.

Quite simply, Lutz's study is one of the most important works on colonial Central America in English or any other language. It is required reading for any student of colonial Central America and essential for anyone interested in colonial Latin American urban history. It offers a useful comparison for other colonial Latin American cities. And it is particularly valuable as a jumping off point for future studies of Central American society and economy. One hopes it finds the readership it deserves. It will be useful for advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in colonial Latin American history, Latin American social and especially urban history, and courses on Central American history.

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