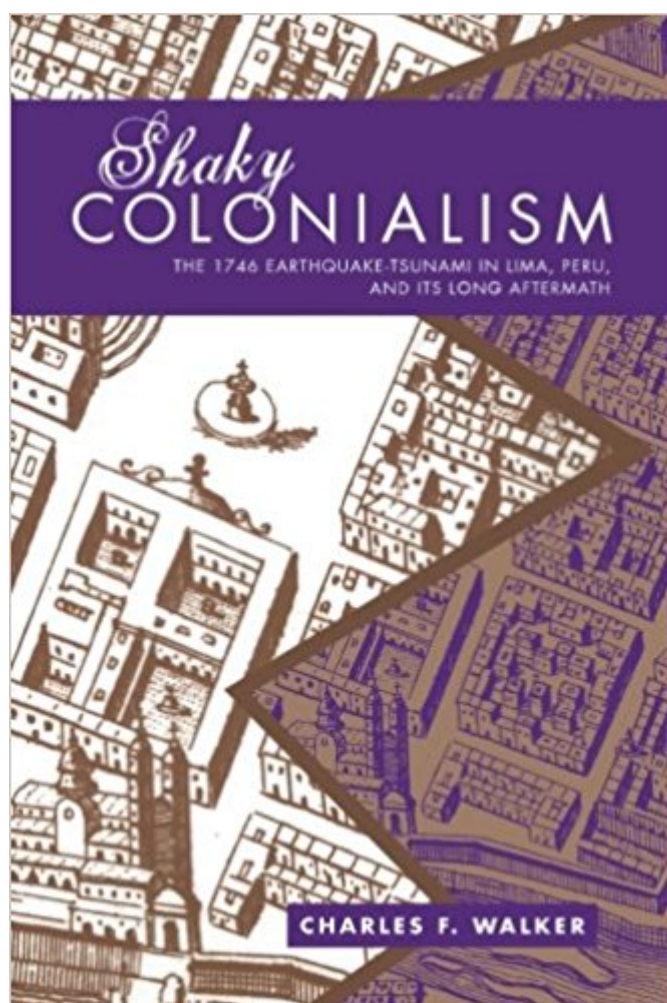


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Shaky Colonialism: The 1746 Earthquake-Tsunami In Lima, Peru, And Its Long Aftermath (a John Hope Franklin Center Book)



Synopsis

Contemporary natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina are quickly followed by disagreements about whether and how communities should be rebuilt, whether political leaders represent the community's best interests, and whether the devastation could have been prevented. *Shaky Colonialism* demonstrates that many of the same issues animated the aftermath of disasters more than 250 years ago. On October 28, 1746, a massive earthquake ravaged Lima, a bustling city of 50,000, capital of the Peruvian Viceroyalty, and the heart of Spain's territories in South America. Half an hour later, a tsunami destroyed the nearby port of Callao. The earthquake-tsunami demolished churches and major buildings, damaged food and water supplies, and suspended normal social codes, throwing people of different social classes together and prompting widespread chaos. In *Shaky Colonialism*, Charles F. Walker examines reactions to the catastrophe, the Viceroy's plans to rebuild the city, and the opposition he encountered from the Church, the Spanish Crown, and Lima's multiracial population. Through his ambitious rebuilding plan, the Viceroy sought to assert the power of the colonial state over the Church, the upper classes, and other groups. Agreeing with most inhabitants of the fervently Catholic city that the earthquake-tsunami was a manifestation of God's wrath for Lima's decadent ways, he hoped to reign in the city's baroque excesses and to tame the city's notoriously independent women. To his great surprise, almost everyone objected to his plan, sparking widespread debate about political power and urbanism. Illuminating the shaky foundations of Spanish control in Lima, Walker describes the latent conflicts about class, race, gender, religion, and the very definition of an ordered society brought to the fore by the earthquake-tsunami of 1746.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“While Walker’s description and analysis of the earthquake-tsunami of 1746 and the subsequent efforts to reconstruct Lima present a fascinating story, his book is particularly important for its careful delineation of the capital’s society and the reforming efforts of Viceroy Manso de Velasco. . . . Shaky Colonialism is an excellent study that every student of eighteenth-century Spanish America and the history of Peru should read.” - Mark A. Burkholder, *Journal of Latin American Studies* “Shaky Colonialism is a fascinating and forcefully argued book that fills a major gap in the scholarly literature on the early Bourbon period in the viceroyalty of Peru. By focusing on the natural disaster of 1746, Walker presents a rich mosaic of race, ethnicity, gender, Baroque piety and the beginnings of Enlightenment-inspired Bourbon regalism in a major urban centre during this largely under-studied period.” - Kenneth J. Andrien, *Social History* “Shaky Colonialism is a superior work of scholarship. Charles F. Walker uses a dramatic incident and its aftermath to present a very intelligent analysis of baroque colonialism and its halting transformation into the Enlightenment-inspired absolutism of the Bourbons. He balances human drama and color to pull the reader into a very serious analysis of colonial society.” - Peter Guardino, author of *The Time of Liberty: Popular Political Culture in Oaxaca, 1750-1850* “As Charles F. Walker shows in this fascinating book, the great earthquake that destroyed Lima in 1746 ruptured along social as well as geological fault lines, exposing profound contradictions between baroque piety, Bourbon Reform, and indigenous identity. Moreover, the extraordinary social aftershocks, ranging from revelation to rebellion, further fragmented Lima’s society, leaving fissures that are still visible in the modern megalopolis.” - Mike Davis, author of *Planet of Slums* “Charles F. Walker explores the fault lines of colonial society through a painstaking archival study of the controversies that followed the 1746 earthquake-tsunami that nearly wiped out Lima. The analysis of the city’s reconstruction is masterful and multifaceted; it gives a vivid sense of popular and elite understandings of race, gender, religion, and urban space. The book is also an imaginative analysis of how the baroque composite monarchy that was the Spanish empire worked: the absolutist policies of the Enlightenment and the Bourbon Reforms consistently gave way to

resistance and negotiation. *Shaky Colonialism* breaks new ground.

—Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, author of *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550–1700*

“The devastating Lima earthquake of 1746 set off huge social and political shock waves in all directions. Charles F. Walker’s beautifully written analysis of great balls of fire and wandering nuns, enlightened reformers, and real and imaginary rebels shows a colonial city deeply at odds with itself well before the notorious crises of the late eighteenth century.

—Kathryn Burns, author of *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru*

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Good Stuff

Great book.

I had to buy this book for a history class. The book was somewhat hard to follow, I found it a bit disorganized. The events described are put in an anachronistic manner, but once you are able to follow what goes on you'll be able to extract information. You might have to reread it a few times.

As Charles Walker explains in the first chapter, *Shaky Colonialism* is not so much a book about the 1746 earthquake-tsunami that engulfed the city as about Lima itself in its late colonial stage of development. The natural disaster generated masses of administrative correspondence, financial assessment, and clerical and lay discussion of the sins that might have brought God's wrath down upon the city, and these sources are a boon for historians. Walker crafts a richly detailed picture of Lima in the 1740s and 1750s, with chapters devoted to the reform-minded but frustrated viceroy, the clergy, women, American Indians, and other interest groups. He argues that both the lines of conflict that would eventually topple the Spanish government of Peru, and the fractured quality of opposition to the Spanish government, which slowed Peru's path to independence, were already evident in the 1740s. Walker's description of the earthquake-tsunami and its immediate aftermath is gripping; the rest of the exposition is a little dry, more focused on details than larger historical context, so a reader who already understands the broad dynamics of Spanish imperialism will probably get more out of the book than a beginning undergraduate would. But overall, it's a very informative picture of one corner of Spanish Latin America in the middle of the eighteenth century.

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