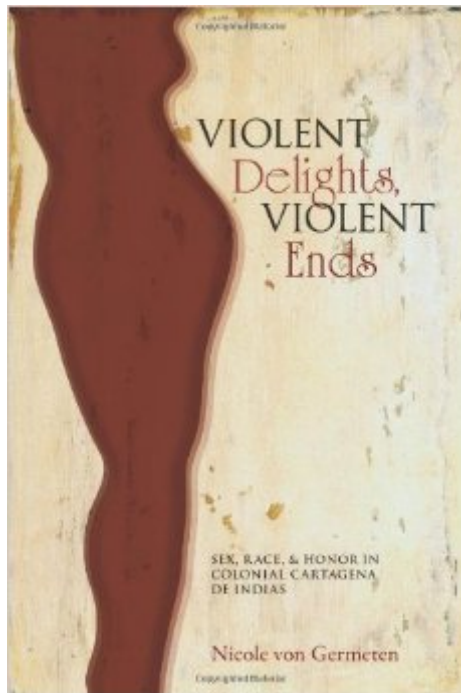


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Violent Delights, Violent Ends: Sex, Race, And Honor In Colonial Cartagena De Indias



Synopsis

This study of sexuality in seventeenth-century Latin America takes the reader beneath the surface of daily life in a colonial city. Cartagena was an important Spanish port and the site of an Inquisition high court, a slave market, a leper colony, a military base, and a prison colony--colonial institutions that imposed order by enforcing Catholicism, cultural and religious boundaries, and prevailing race and gender hierarchies. The city was also simmering with illegal activity, from contraband trade to prostitution to heretical religious practices. Nicole von Germeten's research uncovers scandalous stories drawn from archival research in Inquisition cases, criminal records, wills, and other legal documents. The stories focus largely on sexual agency and honor: an insult directed at a married woman causes a deadly street battle; a young doña uses sex to manipulate a lustful, corrupt inquisitor. Scandals like these illustrate the central thesis of this book: women in colonial Cartagena de Indias took control of their own sex lives and used sex and rhetoric connected to sexuality to plead their cases when they had to negotiate with colonial bureaucrats.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A very interesting compendium of a taboo topic which is difficult to access through standard archives. The work points out that the official formal elaboration of racial classifications in Spanish America was impossible to maintain and that women managed in many cases to negotiate their own roles in society. The book also demonstrates changing official attitudes toward these topics. It is difficult to put this book down until reaching the back cover. Robert L. Hoover, Ph.D.

Strong images, beautiful writing, clear analysis. A excellent example of historical writing at its best. While the book focuses on Cartagena de Indias it's conclusions are applicable to the Spanish Empire as a whole.

A brilliant study of a neglected topic. The author is a regular archive rat, and the book is impressive. Well written and of considerable significance.

An odd bird of a book--essentially a collection of seduction stories assembled to illustrate the assertion that women can have power over men of consequence even in the most restricted of environments. The setting is Seventeenth-century Cartagena, a prominent trading city on the Caribbean coast of New Grenada, in today's Colombia, and, yes, a place and a time where women were expected to conform to a narrow set of rules. The fact that women could occasionally be coquettish or used sexualized language when arguing before a colonial magistrate is not quite the surprise that von Germeten would have us believe, however. Titillation, whatever its various rules and manifestations, has a long pedigree in South American society as several members of President Obama's Secret Service detail found to their chagrin in Cartagena in 2012. Recounting instances of such "maneuverings" may therefore be fun but in itself is not all that revealing of broader trends in the colonial world. If only the author had provided a deep-going analysis, it might have gone different for her, but the text doesn't really go much beyond telling tales assiduously culled from the archives. Von Germeten's book might have provided the basis for some interesting fiction (and indeed, Ricardo Palma, in his *Tradiciones peruanas*, developed something akin to a literary genre using similar material for colonial Lima). In the end, fun though *Violent Delights, Violent Ends* may be, the recounting of such tales does not amount to the "study of sexuality" promised on the book's back cover and in the press's promotional advertisements.

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