Latin American Originals (LAO) is a series of primary-source texts on colonial Latin America. LAO volumes are accessible editions of texts translated from more than seven European and Indigenous American languages into English—most of them for the very first time. Of the eighteen volumes now in print, half illuminate aspects of the Spanish invasions in the Americas during the long century of 1494–1614. The others take the series in varied and exciting directions, from the forging of new Christianities to medical science to dealings with death—to which the present volume makes a stirring contribution.

Taken in the chronological order of their primary texts, Of Cannibals and Kings (LAO 7) comes first. It presents the earliest written attempts to describe Indigenous American cultures, offering striking insight into how Europeans struggled from the very start to conceive a “New World.” The Native Conquistador (LAO 10) tells the story of the (in)famous Spanish Conquest expeditions into Mexico and Central America from 1519 to 1524—but from the startlingly different perspective of a royal Indigenous dynasty, as told by the great-great-grandson of the alternative leading protagonist.

Next, chronologically, are LAOs 2, 1, then 9. Invading Guatemala shows how reading multiple accounts of conquest wars (in this case, Spanish, Nahua, and Maya versions of the Guatemalan conflict of the 1520s) can explode established narratives and suggest a more complex and revealing conquest story. Invading Colombia challenges us to view the difficult Spanish invasion of Colombia in the 1530s as more representative of conquest campaigns than the better-known assaults on the Aztec and Inca Empires. It complements The Improbable Conquest, which presents letters written between 1537 and 1556 by Spaniards struggling—with a persistence that is improbable indeed—to plant a colony along the hopefully named Río de la Plata.
Volume 12 adds intriguingly to that trio. *Contesting Conquest* offers new perspectives on Nueva Galicia’s understudied early history. Indigenous witnesses and informants, their voices deftly identified, selected, and presented, guide us through the grim, messy tale of repeated efforts at conquest and colonization from the late 1520s through 1545.

Continuing chronologically, LAOs 11, 3, 4, and 16 all explore aspects of the aftermath and legacy of the invasion era. *The History of the New World* offers the first English translation since 1847 of part of a 1565 Italian book that, in its day, was a best seller in five languages. The merchant-adventurer Girolamo Benzoni mixed sharp observations and sympathy for Indigenous peoples with imaginary tales and wild history, influencing generations of early modern readers and challenging modern readers to sort out fact from fable. *The Conquest on Trial* features a fictional Indigenous embassy filing a complaint in a court in Spain—the Court of Death. The first theatrical examination of the conquest published in Spain, it effectively condensed contemporary debates on colonization into one dramatic package. It contrasts well with *Defending the Conquest*, which presents a spirited, ill-humored, and polemic apologia for the Spanish Conquest, written in 1613 by a veteran conquistador. *Indigenous Life After the Conquest* presents the papers of a Nahua family, showing how family members navigated the gradual changes and challenges that swept central Mexico in the century after the dramatic upheaval of invasion and conquest. Through Indigenous eyes, we see how a new order was built, contested, shaped, and reconfigured by Nahuas themselves.

LAO 16 dovetails in many ways with volumes 13, 6, 5, and 8—which explore aspects of Spanish efforts to implant Christianity in the Americas. In order, *To Heaven or to Hell* leads the pack, presenting the first complete English translation of a book by Bartolomé de Las Casas. Originally published in 1552, his *Confessionary for Confessors*—soon overshadowed by his famous *Very Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*—was initially just as controversial; conquistadors and other Spaniards were outraged by its demand that they themselves be effectively made subject to the so-called spiritual conquest.

*Gods of the Andes* presents the first English edition of a 1594 manuscript describing Inca religion and the campaign to convert
Indigenous Andeans. Its Jesuit author is surprisingly sympathetic to preconquest beliefs and practices, viewing them as preparing Andeans for the arrival of the new faith. *Forgotten Franciscans* casts new light on conversion campaigns and the conflictive cultural world of the Inquisition in sixteenth-century Mexico. Both LAO 6 and 5 expose wildly divergent views within the Spanish American church on Indigenous religions and how to replace them with Christianity. Complementing those two volumes by revealing the Indigenous side to the same process, *Translated Christianities* presents religious texts translated from Nahuatl and Yucatec Maya. Designed to proselytize and ensure the piety of Indigenous parishioners, these texts show how such efforts actually contributed to the development of local Christianities.

LAOs 17 and 14 take the series into the seventeenth century. *An Irish Rebel in New Spain* casts a sharp eye on the far-reaching intrigues of colonial and inquisitorial politics. William Lamport, aka the Irish Zorro, rose through colonial Mexican society only to lose his life in the clutches of the Holy Office. LAO 17 explores his dramatic life, theological philosophies, and provocative writings to shed light on the cruel whimsy of (mis)fortune in a time of upheaval and instability in Spanish America. Through the “Journal and History” of a Dutch expedition to Chile, LAO 14 extends the series into yet another region of the Americas; *To the Shores of Chile* opens up a new perspective on European-Indigenous interaction, colonization, and global competition in the age of empire.

Taken chronologically, LAOs 18 and 15 take the series into the eighteenth century—and continue its move in bold new directions. This latest addition to the series, *Pandemic in Potosí*, presents in translation a 1719 account of the great plague that devastated the Andean mining metropolis, augmenting the suffering of a population already burdened by dramatic declines in silver production. Yet Potosí’s inhabitants found ways to adapt and survive amid a pandemic that took the lives of one in three of them. As well as echoing events in our own time, LAO 18 weaves together many of the themes explored in other volumes in the series—from sin and salvation to science and medicine. That takes us both chronologically and thematically to LAO 15, which uses an eighteenth-century Guatemalan case study to explore the fascinating intersections between faith and science in the early modern world. *Baptism Through Incision*
presents an eye-opening 1786 treatise on performing cesareans on pregnant women at the moment of their death, contributing to LAO series themes such as empire, salvation, the female body, and knowledge as a battleground.

The source texts in LAO volumes are colonial-era rare books or archival documents, written in European or Indigenous languages. LAO authors are historians, anthropologists, art historians, geographers, and scholars of literature who have developed a specialized knowledge that allows them to locate, translate, and present these texts in a way that contributes to scholars’ understanding of the period, while also making them readable for students and nonspecialists. World-renowned scholar of many aspects of the history of early Latin America, Kris Lane is also a veteran LAO author, so his deft and engaging style now graces this series twice.

—Matthew Restall