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COLONIAL ECUADORIAN *YNDIAS* AND THEIR TEXTILES

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Abstract

Quito, Ecuador was a well established colonial urban center by the late sixteenth century. Although dominated by the Spanish ruling elite, indigenous people (male *yndios*, female *yndias*) and those of both Spanish and Andean ancestry (*mestizos*, *mestizas*) were socially and economically active in Quito. Cloth was a major trade item and prestige good, which circulated widely in Quito society and throughout the Andes. In pre-Hispanic times, Quito was not a major cloth-production center, and most fabric was imported from elsewhere in the Andes. During the colonial period, in addition to Andean textiles, European fabrics, as well those made in the Andes in imitation of European types, became commonly available. The clothing style worn by *yndias* feature native garment forms made of a wide variety of such imported fabrics, both Andean and European, and occasionally Asian.

In the paper, I discuss textiles worn and used by *yndias* of Quito around 1600. Specifically, I detail the fabrics listed by thirteen *yndias* and one *mestiza* in their testaments recorded between 1588-1609; the documents are located in notarial archives in Quito. This data sheds light on economic, social, and especially gender relations in Quito, where Spanish, Inka, and indigenous pre-Inka cultural patterns interacted and often conflicted in the volatile mixture that was colonial society.