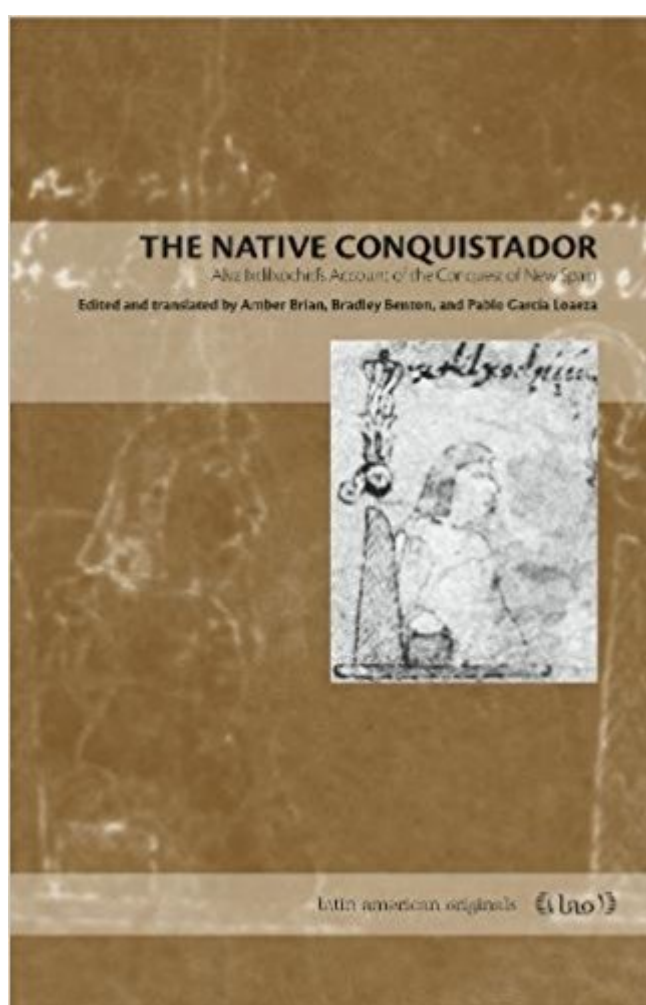


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The Native Conquistador: Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Account Of The Conquest Of New Spain (Latin American Originals)



Synopsis

For many years, scholars of the conquest worked to shift focus away from the Spanish perspective and bring attention to the often-ignored voices and viewpoints of the Indians. But recent work that highlights the *“Indian conquistadors”* has forced scholars to reexamine the simple categories of conqueror and subject and to acknowledge the seemingly contradictory roles assumed by native peoples who chose to fight alongside the Spaniards against other native groups. The *Native Conquistador*—a translation of the *“Thirteenth Relation,”* written by don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl in the early seventeenth century—narrates the conquest of Mexico from Hernando Cortés’s arrival in 1519 through his expedition into Central America in 1524. The protagonist of the story, however, is not the Spanish conquistador but Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s great-great-grandfather, the native prince Ixtlilxochitl of Tetzaco. This account reveals the complex political dynamics that motivated Ixtlilxochitl’s decisive alliance with Cortés. Moreover, the dynamic plotline, propelled by the feats of Prince Ixtlilxochitl, has made this a compelling story for centuries—and one that will captivate students and scholars today.

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Customer Reviews

“This excellent translation accomplishes a decentering of the conquest of Mexico. It makes available a text with an alternate indigenous view of the fall of Tenochtitlan that not only reveals the social, ethnic, and regional divisions in preconquest society but also makes

clear the religious and political imperatives in the creation of the new colonial regime. No one who reads this will be able to explain the conquest any longer as a simple matter of winners and losers. •Stuart B. Schwartz, Yale University •“Amber Brian, Bradley Benton, and Pablo Garc a Loaeza have made an invaluable contribution to the field. We have long needed a state-of-the-art English translation of any of Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s works, and these three have chosen one of the most revealing of his texts. Their thoughtful introduction and careful explanatory notes will render the text especially useful for teaching, but even scholars who are not planning to teach with the book will want to have it and read it, reminding themselves of the extraordinary richness of this colonial mestizo historian’s mind. •Camilla Townsend, Rutgers University •“The conquest of Mexico once again. But this time the history of the Spanish invasion is related one hundred years after the fact and from the perspective of the inhabitants of Tetzaco, the second-in-rank polity in the infamous Aztec Triple Alliance. Don Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Thirteenth Relation exalts his ancestors, especially King Ixtlilxochitl, for never was there a more exemplary ruler, a more devout Christian, a more stalwart enabler of the Spaniards, or another Nahuatl leader who participated in all the many conquests and lived to tell about it. This is ethnopatriotism at its finest, and this splendid scholarly translation into English is a welcome, invaluable contribution to the new conquest history genre. •Susan Schroeder, Tulane University •“The editors of this valuable new volume bring an undeservedly neglected perspective on the so-called conquest of Mexico back to life. The Native Conquistador is not the first modern English translation of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s (b. 1578) Thirteenth Relation •there is a long-out-of-print edition from 1969 •but it is the first one based on an original manuscript rather than a defective nineteenth-century Spanish-language transcription. Brian, Benton, and Garc a Loaeza have crafted a compelling edition of this mestizo historian’s account of the fall of the Mexica and of the subsequent implantation of Spanish overlordship and Catholic faith. Prefacing Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s history with a concisely informative introduction, their translation of this story is smooth and accessible. •“Proudly tracing his lineage to Tetzaco’s legendary pre-contact rulers Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli, Alva Ixtlilxochitl emphasizes his own illustrious native heritage while at the same time trumpeting his and his conquest-era ancestors’ voluntary embrace of what became his own Spanish legacy. He constantly boasts of his ancestor Fernando Cort s Ixtlilxochitl’s constancy in the service of God, the Holy Faith, and the king (roughly in that order) as a key ally of the invading Spaniards. At the same time, his somewhat unexpected and only slightly muted criticism and complaints about the less than upright character of

Hernando Cortés and the Spanish conquistadors (as well as the famous Tlaxcalteca) speak volumes. For Alva Ixtlilxochitl, the Tetzcocans were the real conquistadors; he writes at one point that “if it had not been for Ixtlilxochitl and his brothers, kinsmen, and vassals, the Mexica could have killed every single Spaniard on many occasions. . . . [T]his prince was the greatest and most loyal ally [Cortés] had in this land and whose aid in winning this land was second only to God’s. . . . No one recalls the Aculhua-Tezcuca and their lords and captains, [but rather] they recall the Tlaxcalteca [who] plundered as much as they could and sided with the Christians.” But this history is significant not just for its treatment of the fall of Tenochtitlan, but as well for an important narrative about the subsequent role of the Tetzcocan alliance (and of Ixtlilxochitl’s role in it) as the Spaniards penetrated farther-flung reaches of Mesoamerica, such as the Purhépecha domain in Michoacan, along with incursions into Oaxaca, Tehuantepec, and Guatemala. The elder Ixtlilxochitl’s leadership in the rebuilding of ruined Tenochtitlan into the City of Mexico is celebrated, as is the onset of the spread of Christianity among the indigenous peoples. As the text nears its end, Alva Ixtlilxochitl tells a compelling story about Cortés’s journey to Honduras to punish a mutinous colleague there. Here the Tetzcocan historian decries what he regards as Cortés’s perfidy in condemning and hanging the surviving rulers of the Triple Alliance Empire, including Tenochtitlan’s Cuauhtemoc (who were hostages brought along with the Spanish allied forces). “These repeated flashes of criticism serve to foreground the valor, status, and agency of indigenous rulers and their people. In this way, Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s account may more accurately represent the conflicted nature of the alliance of indigenous conquistadors with the Spaniards. Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s Thirteenth Relation ends up revealing the strong ethnic pride that continued to be felt by indigenous people during and after the fall of Tenochtitlan by centering the feats of his ancestor and his people as the fulcrum of Spanish success, a persistent micropatriotic historical memory seen as well in late colonial micropatriotic indigenous-authored accounts of the coming of Cortés and the new Catholic Faith. Everyone with an interest in gaining a full and deep understanding of the dynamics of the Spanish invasion of Mexico should welcome this vibrant rendering of an indigenous conquistador’s career, and of his descendant’s literary efforts to regain his family’s and his people’s lost glory. Alva Ixtlilxochitl’s account, masterfully brought back to life by this volume’s editors, should join the best-known colonial narratives penned and painted by Spanish and indigenous historians as essential reading for any student of Mexico’s past. It is certain to take its place as a standard source for New Conquest History.” •Robert Haskett,

University of Oregon
 "An excellent translation and critical edition."
 "Choice"
 "A fine translation and well edited. It adds greatly to our understanding of the complexity of the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Clearly the conquest of Mexico was a Rashomon-like episode in which each of the participating groups told its story from its own perspective and bias. The result is a conflicted narrative in which the broad outlines are known, but clarifying the details remains a work in progress. The Native Conquistador provides one more step forward in that enterprise."
 "Ronald H. Fritze, Sixteenth Century Journal"
 "While Alva Ixtlilxochitl's work has received critical attention in recent years from the editors of this volume and others, such as Jongsoo Lee and Galen Brokaw, his writings have not been available in English translation. Hence the present volume is very welcome. The editors' selection from Alva Ixtlilxochitl's corpus is the best choice for reaching a wide audience of students and nonspecialists. . . . For classroom instructors, I recommend this above Cortés's letters or Bernal Díaz del Castillo's account for its succinct, action-packed, and indigenous-centered telling of the Aztec-to-Spanish imperial transition."
 "Louise M. Burkhart, Hispanic American Historical Review"

Amber Brian is Assistant Professor of Spanish at the University of Iowa. Bradley Benton is Assistant Professor of History at North Dakota State University. Pablo García Loaeza is Associate Professor of Spanish at West Virginia University.

This is another important piece in the story of the conquest of Mexico, this time written from the point of view the Acolhua people. It is also an interesting lesson every budding historian should learn about bias, and the motivation of the original author: In this instance Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl was keen to highlight the kindness, bravery, and hard work his people; in particular his ancestor and namesake Prince Ixtlilxochitl; had offered during the Spanish invasion of the continent. The reasons and background behind the creation of his account is expertly explained by the book's editors.

Fantastic work, Congratulations to Pablo Garcia.

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