



## **Natural and Moral History of the Indies (Chronicles of a New World Encounter - Latin America in Translation)**

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*José De Acosta*

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The *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, the classic work of New World history originally published by José de Acosta in 1590, is now available in the first new English translation to appear in several hundred years. A Spanish Jesuit, Acosta produced this account by drawing on his own observations as a missionary in Peru and Mexico, as well as from the writings of other missionaries, naturalists, and soldiers who explored the region during the sixteenth century. One of the first comprehensive investigations of the New World, Acosta's study is strikingly broad in scope. He describes the region's natural resources, flora and fauna, and terrain. He also writes in detail about the Amerindians and their religious and political practices.

A significant contribution to Renaissance Europe's thinking about the New World, Acosta's *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* reveals an effort to incorporate new information into a Christian, Renaissance worldview. He attempted to confirm for his European readers that a "new" continent did indeed exist and that human beings could and did live in equatorial climates. A keen observer and prescient thinker, Acosta hypothesized that Latin America's indigenous peoples migrated to the region from Asia, an idea put forth more than a century before Europeans learned of the Bering Strait. Acosta's work established a hierarchical classification of Amerindian peoples and thus contributed to what today is understood as the colonial difference in Renaissance European thinking.

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568 pages

Review

"[A] crisp new rendition. . . . Both the annotations and the study help put Acosta in a larger cultural and ideological context. . . ."

--Jorge Canizares-Esguerra, "Ethnohistory"

"[S]killfully translated by Frances Lopez-Morillas and adroitly edited by Jane E. Mangan. The book, in truth, is a marvel to behold."

--W. George Lovell, "Canadian Journal of History"

"[W]ell edited. . . . This basic text in translation is an important contribution to such popular fields as ecclesiastical history and the history of colonialism."

--Leonard R. N. Ashley, "Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance"

"[I]nformative, interesting, and illustrative of many characteristics of its historical location. The translation is graceful and clear. The editor's notes are thorough and most helpful."

--James Gaffney, "Religious Studies Review"

"[T]his exemplary translation . . . deserves shelf space in the library of anyone interested in the colonial phase of sixteenth-century Latin America or the concomitant shift from scholastic experiential learning."

--James Ogier, "Sixteenth Century Journal"

"Readers doubtlessly will be impressed by one of the outstanding minds of the sixteenth century. . . . Acosta's fascinating *Historia* offers us a window through which we can explore the knowledge and values of a different culture across time."

--"Colonial Latin American Historical Review"

"This translation ambitiously but powerfully reintroduces this text with the tools gained from today's considerations of historical geography and Amerindian historical sources to better understand the intellectual crossroads of Acosta's time. . . . [T]ruly innovative."

--Anita I. Bravo, "Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History"

"[D]espite the book's fame, the translation by Frances Lopez-Morillas is the first modern translation into English. It is beautifully done, a felicitous combination of translating accurately and idiomatically, while also giving the reader some sense of Acosta's stylistic idiosyncrasies and of his simple, straightforward immediacy."

--Sabine MacCormack, "The Catholic Historical Review"

"This excellent new translation is the first to appear in English since that of Edward Grimston in 1604. . . . Walter D. Mignolo's useful introduction provides a context for the book as well as an outline of its contents. . . . Scholars and students of the European encounter with the Americas will be grateful for this new translation of Acosta's classic treatise. . . . Highly recommended."

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--R. Fritze, "Choice"

"[T]he publication of a new English language edition of the text is warmly to be welcomed; indeed, it appears to reflect, and will surely contribute to, growing interest in the histories and geographies of (post) colonial Latin America in the Anglophone world. Translated into highly readable contemporary English that nevertheless remains faithful to the original, Mangan's edition includes extensive footnotes to the text that provide a wealth of background information and suggestions for further reading that will be useful for undergraduates and researchers alike."

--Heidi V. Scott, "Journal of Latin American Studies"

"This English-language edition of Acosta's work provides a rewarding opportunity to engage the mind of the conquerors. . . . Historian Jane Mangan . . . provides numerous insights into Acosta and the various contingencies (theological, institutional, historical) that governed the writing of his *Historia*. In a thought-provoking commentary that follows Acosta's text, Walter Mignolo highlights the 'border epistemologies' that are absent from Acosta's text, yet that were central to the lives of millions of Indians and mestizos during and since the colonial period. Frances Lopez-Morillas has done an admirable job translating the original Spanish text. . . ."

--Daniel T. Reff, "Anthropological Quarterly"

"Jane E. Mangan's edition and Frances Lopez-Morillas' translation of the "*Historia*" is a major contribution to Latin American studies. . . . Of special significance to this edition is Walter D. Mignolo's introduction and commentary. . . . Frances M. Lopez-Morillas . . . renders an excellent translation of the "*Historia*," Acosta's elegant simple prose is captured completely by the translator. The work reads so smoothly one might think that its original language is English. . . . Mangan's edition is an excellent example of thoughtful and scrupulous research and reflection. I highly recommend that it become an essential work for consultation by serious scholars and students of colonial Latin America."

--Charles Kargleider, "South Eastern Latin Americanist"

"A superb translation of José de Acosta's "*Natural History*" into contemporary English that has been long overdue, with a first-rate introduction by one of America's outstanding Hispanists. The volume should prove useful to those interested in the natural history of the New World, the history of the Jesuits, and an understanding of Catholic conversion efforts in the sixteenth century."—Patricia Seed, Rice University

"José de Acosta's "*Natural and Moral History of the Indies*" is the work of one of the sixteenth century's keenest minds. Based on more than seventeen years of personal experience in Peru and Mexico as well as correspondence with fellow Jesuits around the world, Acosta creates a comparative understanding of the New World. This modern translation loses none of the freshness of Acosta's prose and thankfully makes available to readers one of the most widely read and most influential books ever written on the Americas."—Thomas Cummins, University of Chicago

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From the Back Cover  
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