

After invading highland Guatemala in 1524, Spaniards claimed to have smashed the Kaqchikel and K'iche' Maya kingdoms and to have forged a new colony "with their leader, Pedro de Alvarado, as Guatemala's conquistador. This volume shows that the real story of the Spanish invasion was very different. Designed to be an accessible introduction to the topic as well as a significant contribution to conquest scholarship, the volume presents for the first time English translations of firsthand accounts by Spaniards, Nahuas, and Mayas. Alvarado's letters to Cortes, published here in English for the first time in almost a century, are supplemented with accounts by one of his cousins, by his brother Jorge, and by Bernal Diaz and Bartolome de Las Casas. Nahua perspectives are presented in the form of pictorial evidence, along with written testimony by Tlaxcalan and Aztec veterans who fought as invading allies of the Spaniards; their claim to have done most of the fighting emerges as a powerful argument. The views of the invaded are represented by Kaqchikel and Tzutujil accounts. Together, these sources reveal a fascinating multiplicity of perspectives and show how the conquest wars of the 1520s were a profoundly brutal moment in the history of the Americas.

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