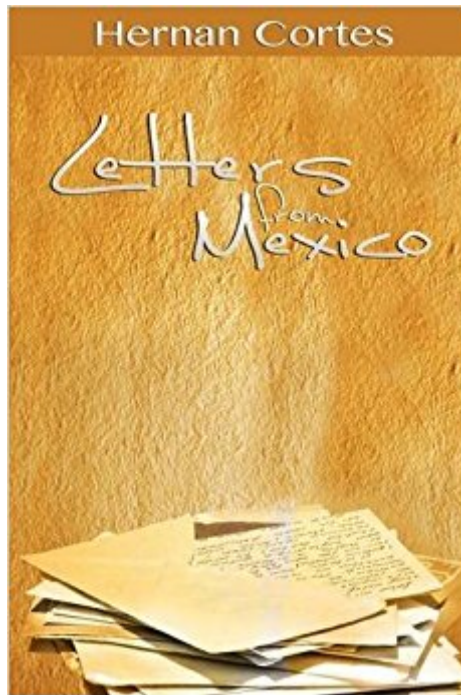


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# Letters From Mexico



## Synopsis

Hernan Cortes's *Cartas de Relacion*, written over a seven-year period to Charles V of Spain, provide an extraordinary narrative account of the conquest of Mexico from the founding of the coastal town of Veracruz until Cortes's journey to Honduras in 1525.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] welcome re-issue of Anthony Pagden's fine translation of Cortes's *Cartas De Relacion*. . . . This edition is a model of how to present a sometimes difficult text to an English-speaking readership." B.W. Ife, *Times Higher Education Supplement* "[The] definitive translation. . . . It adds up to one of the most fascinating Machiavellian documents to come out of the Renaissance." Carlos Fuentes, *The Guardian* "[Pagden] provides us with two important innovations: the first reliable edition of the most important Spanish text . . . and annotations that draw on Pagden's own profound knowledge of Mesoamerican cultures. . . . Impressive . . . [The text and notes] capture the sweep and detail of two peoples looking on each other with amazement. . . . Rarely have the complexities of these early European and American interactions been made so accessible to readers in English." Helen Nader, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* "[Pagden] carefully translated and highly readable text of the letters is further distinguished by extensive explanatory notes and a bibliography of cited sources. . . . An essential book for the library of any serious Mexicanist." Stephen A. Colston, *American Indian Quarterly* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English, Spanish (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this

title.

Late in his life, somewhat neglected but still mightily feared in his restless, Castilian retirement, Hernan Cortes managed to get a fleeting audience with the man to whom he had devoted his life and stunning achievements of conquest. That man was the Spanish King and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V; that man had been the exclusive recipient of the five detailed letters written by Cortes from Mexico. What Cortes said to his emperor during the rapid and frustrating audience of his later years is, I think, one of history's most pithy and accurate summaries: "I gave you more provinces than your ancestors gave you cities." The cleverly written, informative and entertaining letters from Mexico are, in effect, political right-of-way documents, whereby Cortes directly sought (and finally got) ever-increasing power from an emperor who was above both him and his immediate superior and essential antagonist in New Spain (Diego Velasquez). It can easily be said, in fact, that Velasquez was a much more essential and necessary enemy to Cortes and his men than poor Moctezuma ever was. So while the letters have the vivid content of victorious battles and conquests over a truly foreign and exotic foe, they never really stray from their political reason for existence. They are, in sum, masterpieces of how to gain leverage, power and treasure from one's often hesitant superior. This edition of the translated letters comes with introductions by Padgen and Elliott, the former an American historian/translator and the latter a British historian. Both of these academics have written summaries of Cortes and his life and his writings that can be eagerly read by general audiences. This book is, in the final analysis, an account of men and power first, and events and saga second.

It is a great resource book (about 4 stars worthy) but it is so long and tedious that I ended up looking on Wikipedia for the condensed version. Yes. Yes, I did. I kept thinking, "When are we going to get to an actual letter written by Cortes?" It has a lot of detail and I did learn a lot but I did abandon the book for the Wiki version. Did you know that Cortes' biggest foes were not the Native Americans but the other Conquistadors? Interesting. Big ambitions, big egos, big enemies. Did you know that Cortes took a lot of liberties in describing Montezuma's palace? In reality, it wasn't as "Roman" as he described. Did you know that Spain became a world power and the richest country of its time because of the Mexican gold & silver loot that was sent?

I give this book one star because it is only one letter out of Cortez's five letters. The title is misleading.

Its an original (translated) autobiography written by a Machevillian genius - Hernan Cortes himself. Very informative especially if co-read with Conquist & History of New Spain by Bernal Diaz.

Great information! Great primary source!

Excelent for those in the know how about the Conquest of Mexico!!!!

With the Yale Nota Bene edition one is looking directly into the mind and machinations of one of history's gargantuan actors. It provides enjoyable reading and yet is absolutely critical to rounding out the picture of conflict between "dinosauric", monolithic, even fascist, government entities.

If you are studying this topic or are interested in the Aztec/Mexican people buy this. Remember it is from Cortes to the king so there is some obvious bias which are covered mostly in the footnotes.

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