

(Free pdf) The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16Th-18th Centuries.

## **The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16Th-18th Centuries.**

*Serge Gruzinski*

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# THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO



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**Serge Gruzinski : The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16Th-18th Centuries.** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16Th-18th Centuries.:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Thorough, Meaty, Intellectual, ExcellentBy John D. ComegysI am

slowly reading this book and savoring every paragraph. This is a meaty, scholarly work pitched at a highly intellectual and abstract level. It is very original according to other (scholarly) reviews by experts and raises the bar for explanations of the Spanish Conquest. (I am a serious amateur, not a highly trained scholar of things Meso-American or Mexican.) Gruzinsky carefully explains just what happened when the high civilization of Mesoamerica was conquered. How the common man and 'native elite' adapted, fought to retain their rights, positions, and culture is carefully and surprisingly fully explained. You might think of this as "La Otra Conquista" for intellectuals. The Aztecs, Mixtecs and Purepecha didn't just magically turn into Spaniards. They didn't just role over and quit. They struggled, adapted, prevailed and slowly became modern Mexicans, and this book's excellent work shows how it happened. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. An outstanding rethinking of the meaning of conquest

By F. P. Barbieri

Really outstanding books of history almost inevitably have certain basic common features; in particular, long and patient work on immense amount of often obscure original sources. Therefore favourable reviews often tend to have similar features, in particular praise for the author's immense, or at least uncommon, learning and labour. I dare say that, from the reader's point of view, negative reviews may be more fun, since a book can be bad in infinite ways but good in only one of a few. In this case, I will have to be boring: since this outstanding revisitation of colonial Mexican history is impressively learned, with a strong grasp of basic sources across at least three centuries (and if you think that's easy, just try it); insightful, leaving a clear impression of native spirituality and world-view and of its difference with the Christian and European world of the invaders; and novel. That is the main point. Gruzinski comes to his material with a question nobody before him had asked: how did the natives, heirs of a complex if barbarous civilization and of a very large variety of cultures, react to the presence among them of what was at first, and for considerable time, an alien culture with largely different assumptions and a wholly different world-view? He traces the interaction of Spanish Catholicism and political power with the various local cultures (never failing to make clear that Mexico was not a single culture, but an empire dominating or overshadowing a large number of different tribes) across three centuries, showing that as late as the eighteenth centuries there were broad unassimilated areas - which however tended to fade - and suggesting a subterranean continuity, bubbling up in the unsettled world of pulquerias and colonial slums, between the failures of assimilation in colonial times and the strong anti-clerical currents of post-independence Mexico, which are still a factor in the country today.

Gruzinski's writing is straightforward though not very plain - big words are not avoided and some sentences may take time for the ordinary reader to grasp. But he avoids the bane of the French intellectual - airy generalizations and general pretentiousness: he always has his eye to the object, and is most often accurate, fair, and careful. Some of his views may, I suppose, be challenged: for instance, he treats the enormously widespread problem of alcoholism in the seventeenth century as a by-product of failed assimilation, yet Bernal Diaz del Castillo (one of Cortez's own soldiers, who wrote a memoir at the end of his life) tells us that massive and vicious drunkenness, including details too revolting to mention here, was a feature of pre-Conquest society as he encountered it. Gruzinski, being a pioneer, may have got some things wrong, as pioneers do. But he has given us a completely new and very valuable way to look at an old issue, and done so in a very well-organized, capable and professional way.

The Conquest of Mexico is a brilliant account of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, written from a new and unfamiliar angle. Gruzinski analyses the process of colonization that took place in native Indian societies over three centuries, focusing on disruptions to the Indian's memory, changes in their perception of reality, the spread of the European idea of the supernatural and the Spanish colonists' introduction of alphabetical script which the Indians had to combine with their own traditional - oral and pictorial - forms of communication. Gruzinski discusses the Indians' often awkward initiation into writing, their assimilation of Spanish culture, and their subsequent reinterpretation of their own past and recovers the changing Indian perceptions of the sacred and their "absorption" of elements from the Christian tradition. The Conquest of Mexico is a major work of cultural history which reconstructs a crucial episode in the European colonization of the New World. It is also an important contribution to the study of the relationship between memory, orality, images and writing in history.

Language Notes  
Text: English (translation) Original Language: French