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History of the Indies of New Spain (The Civilization of the American Indian Series)

Fray Diego Duran

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History of the Indies of New Spain (The Civilization of the American Indian Series) Fray Diego Duran Fray Diego Duran's *History of the Indians of New Spain*, newly translated by Doris Heyden, is a vivid evocation of the Aztec world before the Spanish conquest. A sixteenth-century Dominican friar, Duran was born in Spain but raised in Mexico. His firsthand experience of Mexican culture and fluency in the Nahuatl language made him one of the most sympathetic and knowledgeable of the missionary-ethnographers.

Based on a Nahuatl chronicle now lost and on interviews with living Aztec informants, Duran's *History* describes the intrigues and court life of the elite: their sumptuous clothing and jewelry, their elaborate ranks and privileges, the luxury of their gardens and homes. It also tells of the common people, who were forbidden to wear feathers, jade, or cotton or to enter the palace. Duran chronicles daily life in times in times of war and in times of flood and drought, when people sold their children for a handful of corn. Constant warfare yielded tribute of gold, jade, feathers, exoctic foods, and, most important, captives who died on the sacrificial stone, their hearts offered to the sun.

Duran traces the history of the Aztecs from their mythic origins to the destruction of the empire, when bearded strangers came from the east in "houses floating on the water." This definitive unabridged translation is accompanied by Heyden's introduction and annotations, which provide background on recent studies of colonial Mexico and explanations of many details of the *History*.

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