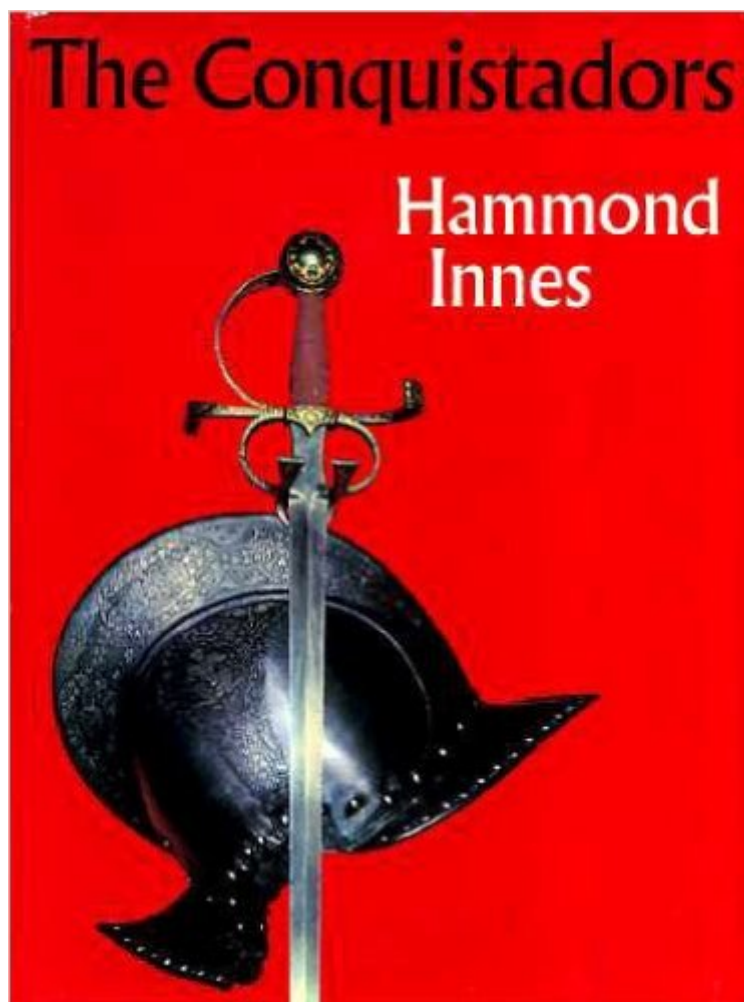


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The Conquistadors



Synopsis

Conquistadors, The by Innes, Hammond

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I came across this book at a friend's house and after leafing through it I could not put it down. Few periods in history are as fascinating as the conquest of the new world by the Spanish. The courage, cunning, lust for gold and sheer audacity of these men is really quite incredible. Innes is a good storyteller and his questioning of the details and the first person accounts are excellent. The only problem with this book is that it is 30 years old. There has been much in the way of study in the last 3 decades on the subject expanding our viewpoints. That being said, Innes' account of the conquest is a must read for the history buff!

How did a small bands of Spanish conquistadors defeat the numerically vastly superior Amerind forces in the Aztec empire and the Inca empire? Innes offers a carefully documented, highly readable explanation of the very different characters of Cortes and Pizarro. It's a fascinating read. Cortes was an educated minor nobleman, whose letters back to Spanish King Charles offer one source for Innes. Cortes defeated the Aztecs by allying himself with unhappy neighbors, and considerable canny political intrigue. When the Aztec leader Montezuma was killed and Cortes driven out of what is modern-day Mexico City, Cortes promptly fought his way back to power. Cortes may have been brutal, but there is something there to admire in his tactics, if not his world view. Pizarro, by contrast, was an uneducated, illiterate thug, who lucked into an Incan civil war and was able to seize the person of the Incan emperor Atahualpa, by betrayal. He accepted Atahualpa's

offer to ransom himself for the famous room full of gold, but betrayed Atahualpa again and had him executed. I was unable to find a single promise that Pizarro made and actually kept. My only criticism of Innes' excellent effort is that he is just a shade too apologetic for the Conquistadore mentality. He is at pains to establish its roots in the end of the Spanish effort to defeat the Moors. But unbridled greed is still unbridled greed, and the picture that Innes paints is incredible. If you want to understand Latin and South America today, I think you must read this book.

A very good book. It moves along fast and gives you a solid overview of the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs by Cortes and the Incas by Pizarro without getting into too much detail. It gives background on the culture and daily life of the Aztecs and Incas and provides an interesting retracing of the routes taken by the conquistadors. The story of the Incan conquest is particularly interesting.

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