



The History of the Conquest of Mexico

William Hickling Prescott, Joaquín Collado

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William Hickling Prescott (May 4, 1796 – January 28, 1859) was an American historian and Hispanist, who is widely recognized by historiographers to have been the first American scientific historian. His works "The History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic" (1837), "The History of the Conquest of Mexico" (1843), "A History of the Conquest of Peru" (1847) and the unfinished "History of the Reign of Phillip II" (1856–1858) have become classic works in the field, and have had a great impact on the study of both Spain and Mesoamerica. Historians admire Prescott for his exhaustive, careful, and systematic use of archives, his accurate recreation of sequences of events, his balanced judgments and his lively writing style. Prescott started drafting the "History of the Conquest of Mexico" in October 1839. However, Prescott faced difficulties in writing the work which he had not encountered previously. There was relatively little scholarship on Aztec civilization, and Prescott dismissed much of it as "speculation", and he therefore had to rely almost exclusively on primary sources (with the exception of Humboldt).

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