The Importance of the Expedition of Hernando De Soto in North America and its Historiographical Evolution.

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The Importance of the Expedition of Hernando De Soto in North America and its Historiographical Evolution.

By Heather Hamilton


History 499

Senior Seminar

Dr. Max Geier
European conquest of the New World began as a search for economic gain, religious freedom and territorial expansion. Dreams of cities filled with gold and the illusive Northwest Passage fueled the passions of European benefactors and explorers. As their search expanded and led further into discovery and conquest, the situation exploded into what historian David Webber describes as "a clash of culture, politics, and belief systems [that] ensued on a global scale."¹ Explanations for Hernando De Soto's expeditions and discoveries have been reevaluated from the sixteenth century to the present. Historians have increasingly questioned the "Black Legend" thesis, which depicts every action of Spanish colonization as barbarous, versus a more complete social, economic, and political evaluation of Spanish motives and purpose. The Spanish conquistadors' treatment and interactions with the Indian villages of Southeastern North America during the 1540s was greatly influenced by personal ambitions, as well as the vision of the Papacy and the Spanish crown. Areas of emphasis concerning this historical data have changed over time. The social, economic, and political movements in which historians write effect their evaluations of De Soto and Colonial America.

The areas of Spanish settlement in North America were termed the "Spanish Borderlands" by the prominent scholar Eugene Bolton, in the 1920's. Bolton identified and stereotyped the conquistador, the Christian mission, and the Spanish military outpost, "as the primary agencies of Spanish Colonial frontier expansion."² More recently, historians like James Axtell, describe the

Conquistador as a "mediator for introducing new order." Bolton, however, emphasized the Spanish need for first conquering a society and then exploiting its already established systems, population and resources.

To expedite their need for expansion, and to justify their endeavors, the Spanish used The Proclamation of Palacious Rubis of 1513. The Requirmento was designed to outline Spain’s policy regarding the New World, formally configuring behaviors and guidelines concerning the Catholic Church and Native Americans. With each new destination, the Spanish explorers would read aloud The Requirmento, immediately overtaking the existing community. Although members of Spanish society questioned the humanity of The Requirmento, it remained a part of Spanish society for several years, because it appealed to the Spanish rulers.

The Papacy desired God-fearing men to deliver the message of Christianity to the pagans. Guided by military actions, The Requirmento inextricably connected the Catholic faith and Spanish Law. In evaluating Spanish goals and actions regarding the use of The Requirmento, Historian and demographer Henry H. Dobyns states, “The Christian mission became the most important bi-ethnic frontier institution, deliberately changing the culture of Indoamericans to suit Spanish Ethnocentric values.”

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7 McCallister, Lyle N. Spain and Portugal in the New World, 1492 -1700. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 106.
8 Ibid, 2
9 Dobyns, Spanish Colonial Frontier Research, 6.
With a vast ocean separating the Spanish crown from conquistador activity, the Spanish explorers were able to treat the Natives as chattel without any recourse. Any resistance by the native population was seen as the beginning of a rebellion, and the leaders were immediately punished. Pope Paul III, (1534-49) issued *Subliminus Deus*, stating "The Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of property, even though they may be outside the faith of Jesus Christ...nor should they in any way be enslaved." In response to this Papal Bull, De Soto stated, "Let this law be formally obeyed, but not enforced." The conquistador, declaring his intent in Florida stated, "We protest that the deaths and losses which shall accrue from this are [the natives'] fault, and not that of [the crown], ours, nor of the cavaliers who came with us." *The Requisitum* was difficult for the Natives to comprehend. According to Webber, "the concept of land ownership to the natives tended to regard the owners of the land as possessing greater rights than the nominal owners of the land.* The *Requisitum* became an ultimatum. The natives were forced to accept the church, or fall victim to all the harm and evil the conquistadors could do.

De Soto's interest in exploration and riches began in his teen years. He spent his early years killing natives in Panama and his twenties doing the same in Nicaragua. As a member of Pizarro's conquest of South America, De Soto played a prominent role in the successful Spanish conquest of Peru. In 1541, at the age of 39, Hernando De Soto, rich from his enterprise with Pizarro, looked

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12 Mackenthun, 84.
13 Horgan, 186.
15 McCallister, 90.
16 Webber, 18.
17 Milanich, xi.
18 Wright, Ronald. *Stolen Continents. The Americas through Indian Eyes Since 1492.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 84.
19 [www.newadvent.org/cathan/04753.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathan/04753.htm), (As seen on 3/31/00)
to colonize North America in search of treasures equal to Incan gold.\textsuperscript{20} Rangel\textsuperscript{21}, a member of the expedition, (as noted later) stated, "De Soto thought that the experience of the South was sufficient to show him what to do in the North, and he was deceived as history will tell."\textsuperscript{22}

Three men in De Soto's expedition wrote of their experiences in southeastern North America. The first to be published was an anonymous account, written by a Portuguese member of the expedition.\textsuperscript{23} It was later published under the authorship of "A Gentleman Of Elvas". Although no surname can be traced to the original author, the details paint an accurate picture of what Spaniards experienced.\textsuperscript{24}

The second account is by Rodrigo Rangel, De Soto's secretary on the expedition. His diary of events and encounters served as the basis for his official report.\textsuperscript{25} This official narrative was rendered by Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo.\textsuperscript{26} The third account was a diary by Hernandez Biedma. His diary relates similar accounts to those of Ranjel and "The Gentleman of Elvas." Using these accounts, historians are able to compile a more complete description of De Soto's encounters in Florida.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 1.
\textsuperscript{21} The spelling of Rodrigo Ragel's name differs from "Rangel" to "Ranjel," depending on the which primary source is used.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, vi.
\textsuperscript{24} Quinn, David B. \textit{New American World. A Documentary History of North America to 1612}. (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 91..
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, 91.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 159.
In order to reach his destination, De Soto sold his assets to gain enough capital to support his expedition. At the same time, he married into the Castille royalty. In April, 1537, De Soto received the authority to explore and settle Florida. The emperor made him the Governor of the island of Cuba and overseer of Florida. De Soto would have territorial rights to a certain area of Florida, once conquered. It was his quest for land, power and resources which fueled De Soto's relentless search for the treasures that would certainly be found during the next expedition, in the next town or village. De Soto's expedition left the Island of Cuba in 1539 heading for Florida. They were equipped with nine vessels and 1000 men. The convoy reached the shores of present day Tampa Bay on Friday, May 30th, 1541.

Once landed on the Florida coast, the first town De Soto reached was the border town of Ochile. His expedition was complete with trumpets, fifes and drums. These instruments were used to waken and frighten the sleeping villages. The clamoring and commotion peaked the curiosity of some Indians. As they ventured out for a closer observation, the Spanish captured these natives for use as slave labor. With the pomp and circumstance associated with De Soto's reading of The Requiem, international law was replaced by Spanish Civil Law, and Spain acquired new territory and subjects to her dominion. The Spanish use of The Requiem continued into the 1540s. After 1542, the conquistadors were no longer required to use the Requiem of 1513.

De Soto's army took on the appearance of a great caravan. Soldiers and scouts were the first to advance. The captured natives followed behind, bearing the burdens of the Spanish. The slaves carried food, pelts, stolen goods and supplies to ease the strain on the Spaniards as they traced the

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27 Webber, 50.
29 Ibid, 23.
30 Dobyons, Henry F. Their Number Became Thinned. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 140.
31 Mackenthun, 12.
32 McCallister, 103.
Piedmont River, crossed the mountains down into the Tennessee River valley and into the Alabama River Valley. Hernando De Soto became the first European to enter the heart of the North American Southeast, traveling thousands of miles inland.

The scouts, including Baltazar de Gallegos, discovered a Christian man living among the Indians. De Gallegos described the Christian as "naked and sunburnt, his arms tattooed in their manner." Ranjel, in his journal, speaks of Ortiz' plea for his life. "Sirs, for the love of God and Holy Mary, slay not me; I am a Christian like yourselves and was born in Seville. My Name is Johan Ortiz." Juan Ortiz was abandoned by members of his ship from the Navarez Expedition years before. He was taken in and cared for by natives, and given the freedom to join the Spaniards when news of foreign arrival reached the Chief of Mococo. The Cacique, (chief) released Ortiz because "great men should be liberal." The Chief recognized the need to pacify the Spaniards, and avoided potential conflict by letting the Christian go. Upon the discovery of Ortiz, the Christian left behind by members of a previous expedition, the commander De Soto was "no less pleased than the others" at the news of a reliable, loyal interpreter.

As De Soto moved into the province of Ochus, sixty leagues from the site of Apalche, he discovered a good seaport to use in restocking provisions. He sent a man in his command, Maldanado, to Havana for supplies. Maldanado was ordered to return the following:

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33 Quinn, 90.
34 Webber, 48.
35 Bourne, vol 1, 26.
36 Bourne, vol 2, 57.
37 Spelling of Johan Ortiz also appears as Juan Ortiz depending on the primary source.
38 Bourne, vol 1, 32.
39 Ibid, 33.
40 Bourne, vol 1, 27.
summer. If De Soto was not at the port, he was to return the following year.\textsuperscript{41} Hernando De Soto would never see Maldanado again.

De Soto then turned inland on his search for riches. He came upon the village of Yupaha. The Cacique spoke to De Soto saying, "Tell me who you are, whence you come, whither you go, what you seek that I might serve you better." De Soto responded, "I am a child of the sun seeking the greatest prince in the richest province." The Cacique sent the caravan to the great Lord in Ocute. \textsuperscript{42}

De Soto took a youth guide from the Cacique to aid in the navigation to Ocute. But the youth became confused in the search. De Soto menaced the youth telling him he would be thrown to the dogs if he lied or put them of course once again.\textsuperscript{43} It was also noted in Webber that the companions of De Soto threatened that "Uncooperative Indians might be put to the sword, thrown to the dogs, or burned alive, or might have had a hand or nose severed. De Soto killed and murdered with little provocation, ... De Soto was much given to the hunting of Indians on horseback."\textsuperscript{44} These are but a few examples of the terror and cruelty inflicted by De Soto.

Starving and lost, the Spaniards reached the village of Socorro. The village, deplete of its population, had plenty of food stores and provisions for the marauders. The Spanish located four Indians, however, who were unwilling to provide any helpful information to De Soto. Irritated, De Soto ordered one Indian immediately burned alive. As this took place, another native, fearing for his life, told of the two-day trip to Cutifachiqui.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, 50.  
\textsuperscript{42} Bourne, vol 1, 55.  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 57.  
\textsuperscript{44} Webber, 51.  
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 63.
Hearing of the great treasures in Cutifachiqui, De Soto's need for treasure was revitalized. He took pearls from the woman chief and asked about treasures located elsewhere. To entice the Spaniards away from her land and people, she spoke of lands holding precious metals and gems. "The Gentleman of Elvas" spoke of De Soto's motivation to continue, "The Governor then resolved at once to go in quest of that country, and being an inflexible man..., he had made up his mind."46 De Soto took the lady chief as a prisoner, and began his search for treasure. As the expedition pursued the next village, the lady cacique escaped and returned to her people. The Spaniards were again without food, supplies, or a guide.

De Soto found and entered the village of Chiaha. He met the chief and asked for thirty women to be used as slaves. The news spread quickly through the village and the inhabitants deserted. Angry, De Soto cut and destroyed the maize fields.47 The cacique did not wish to continue relations with De Soto. He hid out in an attempt to avoid capture, telling the leader, "If [you] wish to go in peace, [you] should quit at once and not persist in carrying [me] away by force."48 The ensuing battle resulted in 2500 natives and 18 Spaniards killed. The Spanish entered the town, set it on fire, burning many Indians alive. The Spanish, short on supplies, dressed their wounds with the fat of the dead Indians.49

After this battle, still in search of an empire equivalent to that of the Incas in South America, De Soto learned that Maldanado was waiting with provisions just six days away. De Soto chose to keep this news a secret from his starving and tired men, "that he might not be interrupted in his purpose..."50

48 Ibid, 91.
49 Bourne, vol 2, 20.
50 Bourne, vol 1, 98.
During his travels throughout the modern day Southern United States, "De Soto left a trail of incredible violence and destruction among the Native population."\textsuperscript{51} Historian Ronald Wright, reflecting on the journeys of De Soto, holds he made "no conquests; though he won battles; he founded no towns, though he razed many."\textsuperscript{52} De Soto's expedition, which sought to continue the glorious conquests of Pizarro and Cortes, ended in disaster after a fruitless four year search for a golden kingdom.\textsuperscript{53} Wright stated De Soto was a "fighter, not a settler; the golden prize was always across the next river, over the next range."\textsuperscript{54}

De Soto would never find his city of gold, the illusive El Dorado. Historian Charles Morriiss describes the death of De Soto: "On the day of May 21, 1542, the companion of Pizarro breathed his last, after a remarkable journey in which the quest for gold had led him over a vast stretch of the North American continent."\textsuperscript{55} Throughout his journey, (as well as for those who came after him) De Soto always pursued riches equal to those he extracted from Peru. De Soto was attracted to the mainland by rumors of gold, and the hope of finding a strait leading to the east.\textsuperscript{56} When the gold was not available at his current location, he was easily led astray by natives eager to expedite their departure and permanently remove him from their surroundings.

As history evaluates the events of sixteenth century Spanish Colonial America, it is important to examine the conqueror, as well as the conquered. As this happens, reviewing current literature as well as primary documents allows the historian to gain a more complete understanding of the events in the 1500s. It is important to remember the "Indians [were] dominated but not vanquished....keep alive the memory of what the Europeans have 'forgotten'-- a continuous series

\textsuperscript{51} Mackenthun, 197.
\textsuperscript{52} Axtell, 52.
\textsuperscript{53} Mackenthun, 197.
\textsuperscript{54} Wright, 87.
\textsuperscript{55} Morriiss, 117.
of uprisings and awakenings which have left hardly a trace in the occupier's historical literature." As this tradition developed throughout time, it became known as the Black Legend. The historian Magnaghi defines it as "a limited knowledge and understanding of the region, plus anti Spanish prejudice based on sixteenth century English attitudes." Historian J.T. Elliott states The Black Legend "stamps an indelible image of Spanish atrocities on the European consciousness. By the early 1580s therefore, the most lurid information about Spanish conduct was circulating in Europe."

The Black Legend became a prominent ideological weapon used against Catholic and imperial Spain." Although rumors and exaggerated stories were abundant in Europe, the "crude propaganda of foreign enemies was perhaps in the long run less debilitating to Spanish moral than the increasing doubts of the Spanish themselves." The ability to have a stable American empire weighed heavily on Spanish colonists and Spanish citizens as well.

The Black Legend continues to have contemporary followers. Herbert Bolton identified himself as a "still un-reconstructed Black Legend Man." Bolton found little good if any, to say of the Spaniards past and present, in their relations during the Spanish American War." Historian James Axtell relates Black Legend supporters "succumb to a totalizing interpretation of the event." As in many disciplines, revisions and reevaluations occur in the field of history.

Charles Gibson "resurrected the Black Legend the revisionists had tried to bury ..[because] ..The

57 Magnaghi, 10.
58 Elliott, 95.
59 Mackenthun, 230.
60 Elliott, 39.
61 Magnaghi, 26.
62 Axtell, 92.
Black Legend provides a gross but essentially accurate interpretation of relations between Spaniards and Indians. 63

The evaluation of Native American society by historian Genes de Sepulveda, writing in the sixteenth century is biased, due to his European background. On assessing the capabilities of the Natives he states, "Because of the intellectual differences between Europeans and the aborigine of America, the later should be subject to the former, and through this natural servitude he would improve his customs, exhausting himself to true humanity, to virtue, and to religion." 64 This is just a sample of the Eurocentric thinking by contemporary historians regarding Native intelligence and desire to attain success.

Even though he found no treasures, the Governor then ordered Balthazar de Gallegos to record good news to encourage the men. However, the reality of the mission reached those in New Spain, as well as De Soto's fellow countrymen in Spain. In his zest for glory and prestige, he not only killed himself and his followers, but also the desire of future Spaniard's to follow in his example. 65

Historian Silvio Zavala explains the Spanish Colonization of America as "characterized by a rich social ideology and a substantial amount of experimentation." 66 Enterprising Spaniards would devote their energies to the readily available resources of their local region, the southeast, rather than risk the formidable obstacles waiting in the northern regions. 67 Historiographically, Zavalla states it is important to focus on all elements of the exploration, for "an account of the

63 Ibid, 672.
64 Zavala, 46.
65 Quinn, 91.
66 Zavala, 114.
conquest limited to the acts of violence between the European and the Native races is a most
incomplete one...economic and social phenomena occurred in colonization with military action." \(^{68}\)

Historians continue to approach the Spanish involvement in Colonial America from
different perspectives. In assessing Spain's economic and social development in the New World,
Edward Gaylor Bourne and Bolton provide a positive assessment of Spanish Colonial efforts. \(^{69}\)
Historian Benjamin Keen notes, "A growing economic and political connection drew the attention
of some historians into an area they had hitherto ignored." \(^{70}\) As the surge of pro-Spanish actions
developed within American historical schools, "the most advanced Indian peoples [were placed] in
a stage of barbarism." Scholarly works produced during this time "downplayed the importance and
accomplishments of the great Native civilizations, and Spanish behavior became regarded as
necessary." \(^{71}\)

Throughout history, contemporary social philosophers shaped the bias in which historians
produced their work. Keen notes "Social Darwinism also favored the treatment of the Natives by
the Spanish in historical writings. The theories of racial inferiority could help justify and explain
Spanish behavior and atrocities." \(^{72}\) Fredrick Jackson Turner, a prominent historian, helped to
further this point of view with his characterization of the frontier as "the meeting point of savagery
and civilization." \(^{73}\) However, more contemporary Historians view the account more completely. As
the Spanish encountered the "savagery" of the native cultures, historian Jerald T. Milanich states
the Natives' "encounter with the Europeans was a prelude to disaster." \(^{74}\)

\(^{68}\) Zavala, 6.
\(^{69}\) Keen, Benjamin. "Main Currents in United States Writings on Colonial Spanish America." *Hispanic American
      Historical Review* 65 November, 1985: 559.
\(^{70}\) Ibid, 660.
\(^{71}\) Ibid, 658.
\(^{72}\) Ibid, 671.
\(^{73}\) Dobyns, *Spanish Colonial Frontier Research*, 5.
\(^{74}\) Milanich, xi.
and historian states "diseases that the Europeans brought to the New World were the diseases of civilization, of cities, and of large numbers of people living together." 75

As the conquistador Hernando De Soto's expeditions of 1539-1543 were chronicled, Dobyns notes they "related inter-ethnic conflicts." 76 Historian Charles Morriss, writing at the turn of the 20th century, wrote that as De Soto's group arrived, the "simple minded Natives gazed with amazement and admiration." 77 A contemporary of Morriss, Oliver Chittwood shared a similar view relating the Spanish view of the Indians as "backward, lacking beasts of burden or technology. Whatever the explanation, aboriginal inhabitants of [present day United States] failed to appreciate and exploit the richest gifts that nature has ever bestowed upon any land." 78

Historian Howard Peckam describes the meeting of the two cultures stating that as the Spanish assumed control of the New World, the conquistadors shared with the world "a whole new continent inhabited by strange races." 79 J.H. Elliott, observing early historians' opinions wrote, "the Indians' ability and desire to achieve equality was clouded by general European ideas about man and society [which] provided a crude frame of reference which could help the Europeans come to terms with the peoples of America." 80 Historian Gary Willis' observations of the cultural interaction was "Amerindians were perceived by the Spanish as problematic neophytes that could not be trusted. In the Sixteenth Century, blood purity became the principle for excluding Indians." 81

76 Dobyns, Henry F. Spanish Colonial Frontier Research, 151.
78 Chitwood, 20.
79 Peckham, 12.
Bernard Moses, the first professor to write on Latin American History argued that "the Spanish practice of mixing races had retarded the advance of Latin America, where as the English practice of liquidating the Indian population served the cause of social progress." Again, the values of Social Darwinism are prevalent in historiography. However, Howard Peckham and Charles Gibson disagree, believing "the historian in the Latin American field must never fail to try to hold in mind the Indian realities that were so meagerly documented, and sometimes only reflected on, in Spanish records."

Another approach, perhaps a more complete study of Native American History, is that belonging to the ethnohistorian. Explaining the field, Dobyns states, "the ethnohistorical approach shows that the history of Native American is—and because of depopulation and its sequel must be—the study of rapid cultural discontinuities." He continues his argument stating, "often, historians have been so concerned with the affairs of the European colonies or the United States that they have almost omitted Indians from their own history." As ethnohistoriography becomes widely accepted, the voids previously left by lost oral traditions can be placed together. Historian Ronald Wright concisely summarized the relationship between Europe and North America stating as the Spanish conquistadors left their legacy, "Europe had made the wilderness it found; America was not a virgin, she was a widow."

The scholarly opinions of De Soto have evolved over time. According to Charles Hudson, "The most miraculous sequence of events which led to the discovery, conquest and conversion of the New World did much to reinforce the linear and progressive, against the interpretation of the

82 Keen, 660.
83 Peckham, 8.
84 Dobyns, Their Number Became Thinned, 25.
85 Dobyns, Native American Historical Demography, V.
86 Wright, 91.
historical process of sixteenth century thought. As a result, at various times of scholarly interpretation, "De Soto has been judged a heroic explorer and a bloody conquistador." When De Soto's expedition "had usurped food storage and their welcome, Native elders spoke of gold and copper stores up north. This bait was swallowed quickly by De Soto, and the expedition was off in search of illusive treasures."

Along with their zeal for treasures, pressure of religion, economic hardship and cruelty, Spaniards also carried "lethal pathogens [which] spread and decimated Native Americans far beyond the limits of face-to-face contact between the Europeans and aboriginal groups." With the weakening of authority due to illness, as well as "the selective execution of ruling elites by De Soto's marauders, [the] traditional authority was weakened."

In the Spaniards' relations with the natives, Historian Oliver Chitwood describes the actions of the conquistador stating, "De Soto displayed a foolish cruelty which aroused their bitter enmity and caused them to put up a brave fight against the invaders." Warfare with the Spaniards killed numerous Indians, but it had 'secondary effects.' Stolen food, taken by the victors, caused starvation and left the Indian populations weak, leaving them susceptible to disease. This was one reason for the Natives to flee their lands. Fleeing the traditional homeland caused trouble within the native community. Excess populations put increased strain on the already taxed food surplus. This lead to increased tension within intertribal relations. Demographer Henry F. Dobyns noted these "Wars of conquest appear to have originated as a consequence of dense population and have ceased with

87 Elliott, 51.
88 Milanich, 225.
89 Wright, 91.
90 Dobyns, Their Number Became Thinned, 25.
91 Ibid, 293.
92 Chitwood, 42.
93 Hudson, 264.
The historic depopulation, caused by inter-American conflict as well as by Spanish invasion, forever changed the landscape of Native American population.

Continuing his argument, Dobyns states that as a result of the invasion, the "surviving Native Americans still fought each other until the end of the seventeenth century. By that time, however, they fought not for aboriginal reasons, but as pawns of and surrogates for agents of colonial powers. The "diminishing numbers of Native Americans reinforced the European belief that human invaders could make better use of the widowed New World territory than the original inhabitants had done." Reflecting on the European evaluation of the North American conquest and Spanish views of Indian subjugation, Alexis de Tocqueville stated, "The Europeans never have been able to change the character of the Indians; and though they have had the power to destroy, they have never been able to subdue and civilize them."

Herbert Bolton's analysis of the "Spanish Borderlands studies have helped the [novice scholar] to see and understand the totality of the American Story. However, one must be careful when reading the accolades of a protégé to his teacher. It is far too easy as a reader to invalidate any other possibility due to an author's ability to pose a convincing argument.

This concept of complete understanding of the American story can be applied on American soil as well as abroad. De Tocqueville remarked, "America, as an entity in space, had demanded incorporation into Europe's mental image of the natural world. American man had to be found his place among the peoples of mankind. And America, as an entity in time, required Integration into Europe's conception of the historical process."

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94 Dobyns, *Their Number Became Thinned*, 333.
95 Dobyns, *Their Number Became Thinned*, 306.
96 Ibid, 8.
97 De Tocqueville, Alexis. "Democracy In America." (Paris, 1843-1840) As found in Axtell’s *The Invasion Within*.
98 Bannon, 3.
99 Elliott, 39.
This evolution in thought opened the door to the past, allowing a new perspective on the Old and the New World. As an expansion of Bolton's ideas, American Colonial History has recently expanded to include a more complete analysis of the peoples and cultures involved. The mixing of Native and Spanish cultures was both a cultural and an economic phenomenon. As history evaluates the events of sixteenth century Spanish Colonial America, it is important to examine the conqueror, as well as the conquered. As this happens, reviewing current literature as well as primary documents allows the historian to gain a more complete understanding of the events in the 1500s. It is important to remember the "Indians [were] dominated but not vanquished....keep alive the memory of what the Europeans have 'forgotten'-- a continuous series of uprisings and awakenings which have left hardly a trace in the occupier's historical literature."100

As this tradition developed throughout time, it became known as the Black Legend.

Keen remarks on the burgeoning interest in Colonial history stating "a growing economic and political connection drew the attention of some historians into an area they had hitherto ignored."101 This opened the door to the past, allowing a new perspective on the Old and the New World. As an expansion of Bolton's ideas, American Colonial History has recently expanded to include a more complete analysis of the peoples and cultures involved. The mixing of Native and Spanish cultures was both a cultural and an economic phenomenon.

Using the expedition of Hernando De Soto as an example, one can see how varying interpretations of one event can change over time. By instilling in the minds of novice scholars the importance of recognizing the inherent bias in historians' work, a more sober analysis of historical data can be reached. The interpretations of De Soto will continue to evolve over time. Historical bias will remain constant.

100 Dobyns, 8.
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