

The conquest of Guatemala told anew

Strike Fear in the Land

*Pedro de Alvarado and the Conquest
of Guatemala, 1520–1541*

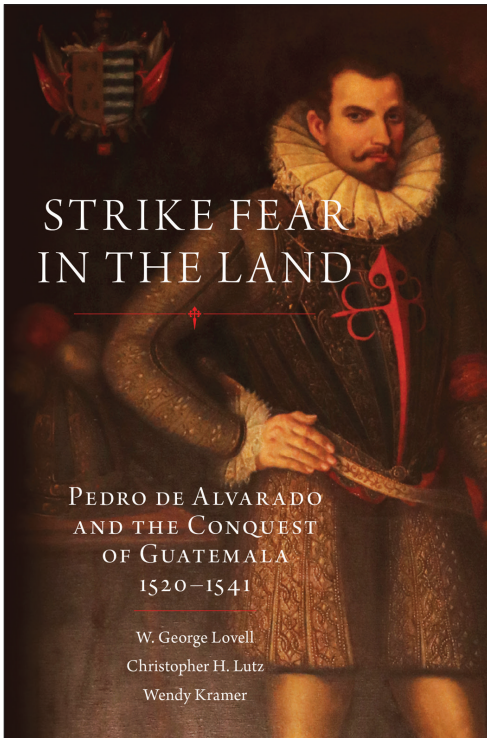
By W. George Lovell, Christopher H. Lutz and Wendy Kramer

The conquest of Guatemala was brutal, prolonged and complex, fraught with intrigue and deception, and not at all clear-cut. Yet views persist of it as an armed confrontation whose stakes were evident and whose outcomes were decisive, especially in favor of the Spaniards. A critical reappraisal is long overdue, one that calls for us to reconsider events and circumstances in the light of not only new evidence but also keener awareness of indigenous roles in the drama.

While acknowledging the prominent role played by Pedro de Alvarado (1485–1541), *Strike Fear in the Land* reexamines the conquest to give us a greater appreciation of indigenous involvement in it, and sustained opposition to it. Authors W. George Lovell, Christopher H. Lutz, and Wendy Kramer develop a fresh perspective on Alvarado as well as the alliances forged with native groups that facilitated Spanish objectives. The book reveals, for instance, that during the years most crucial to the conquest, Alvarado was absent from Guatemala more often than he was present; he relied on his brother, Jorge de Alvarado, to act in his stead. A pact with the Kaqchikel Maya was also not nearly as solid or long-lived as previously thought, as Alvarado's erstwhile allies soon turned against the Spaniards, fomenting a prolonged rebellion. Even the story of the K'iche' leader Tecún Umán, hailed in Guatemala as a national hero who fronted native resistance, undergoes significant revision.

Strike Fear in the Land is an arresting saga of personalities and controversies, conveying as never before the turmoil of this pivotal period in Mesoamerican history.

W. George Lovell is Professor of Geography at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, and the author of *A Beauty That Hurts: Life and Death in Guatemala*. **Christopher H. Lutz** is the author of *Santiago de Guatemala, 1541–1773: City, Caste, and the Colonial Experience*. **Wendy Kramer** is the author of *Encomienda Politics in Early Colonial Guatemala, 1524–1544: Dividing the Spoils*.



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