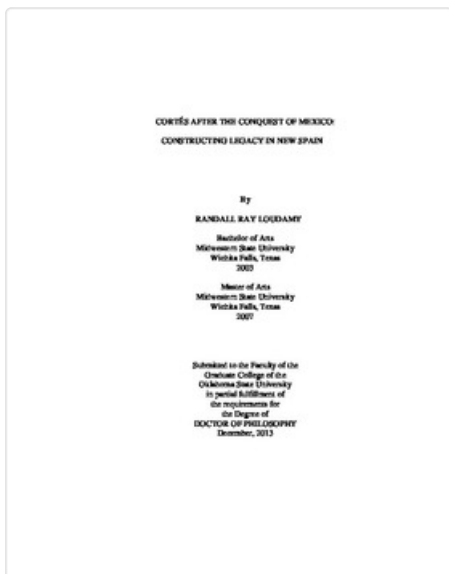


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# Cortés after the Conquest of Mexico: Constructing Legacy in New Spain

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Abstract

This dissertation examines an important yet woefully understudied aspect of Hernán Cortés after the conquest of Mexico. The Marquisate of the Valley of Oaxaca was carefully constructed during his lifetime to be his lasting legacy in New Spain. The goal of this dissertation is to reexamine published primary sources in light of this new argument and integrate unknown archival material to trace the development of a lasting legacy by Cortés and his direct heirs in Spanish colonial Mexico. Part one looks at Cortés's life after the conquest of Mexico, giving particular attention to the themes of fame and honor and how these ideas guided his actions. The importance of land and property in and after the conquest is also highlighted. Part two is an examination of the marquisate, discussing the key features of the various landholdings and also their importance to the legacy Cortés sought to construct. This analysis is extended into the second and third generation of the marquisate, an aspect of Cortés's legacy mostly ignored by scholars, to trace the success or failure of various developments. In looking at Cortés and the marquisate in its entirety (as compared to regional studies), it becomes clear that the marquisate was more important to Cortés than previous historical literature indicates, as it was directly tied to his desire to construct a legacy in New Spain as well as his ideas of fame and honor. Cortés utilized the marquisate not only for economic gain, but for political and social goals as well. Through showing that Cortés was devoted to the development and growth of his marquisate, this research highlights the legacy Cortés sought to construct in Mexico, and the impression he hoped to make on Mexico beyond the conquest. Cortés controlled the largest estate in New Spain, and how he and his heirs managed that land would fundamentally shape New Spain and the history of Mexico.

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