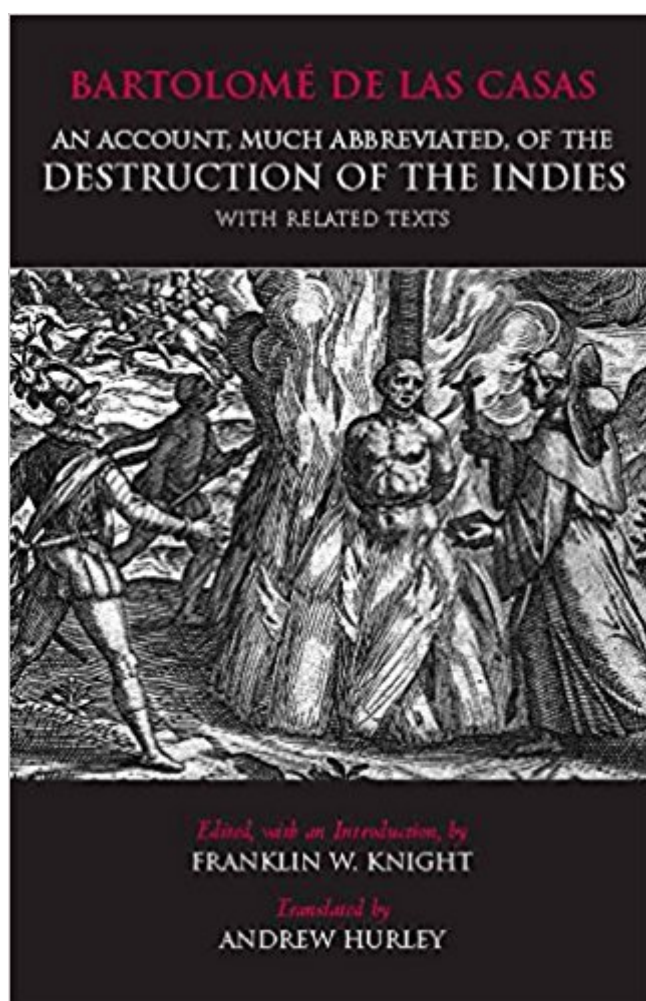


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# An Account, Much Abbreviated, Of The Destruction Of The Indies With Related Texts



## Synopsis

Fifty years after the arrival of Columbus, at the height of Spain's conquest of the West Indies, Spanish bishop and colonist Bartolomé de Las Casas dedicated his *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* to Philip II of Spain. An impassioned plea on behalf of the native peoples of the West Indies, the *Brevísima Relación* catalogues in horrific detail atrocities it attributes to the king's colonists in the New World. The result is a withering indictment of the conquerors that has cast a 500-year shadow over the subsequent history of that world and the European colonization of it.

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## Customer Reviews

Andrew Hurley's daring new translation dramatically foreshortens that five hundred years by reversing the usual priority of a translation; rather than bring the *Brevísima Relación* to the reader, it brings the reader to the *Brevísima Relación*--not as it is, but as it might have been, had it been originally written in English. The translator thus allows himself no words or devices unavailable in English by 1560, and in so doing reveals the prophetic voice, urgency and clarity of the work, qualities often obscured in modern translations. An Introduction by Franklin Knight, notes, a map, and a judicious set of Related Readings offer further aids to a fresh appreciation of this foundational historical and literary work of the New World and European engagement with it. This is a splendid new translation of *Brevísima Relación*, the famous denunciation of the Spanish conquest of the Americas, written by Dominican friar Bartolomé de

Las Casas (1483-1566). . . . The Hackett edition of *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias* . . . has a lot to offer to undergraduates. . . . Knight's introduction to the text makes in fact for a compelling read. . . . Together with Knight's ample annotations, which refer students to the most up-to-date secondary literature, it makes for a wonderful introduction to the history of Europe's expansion into the Western Hemisphere." --Martine van Ittersum, *Journal of Early Modern History*

Las Casas comes alive in this version. The translator turns Las Casas' rough and rambling style, which has thwarted previous translators, into the Biblical tirade that Las Casas intended; the rambling becomes rumbling with these sonorous word choices. This will doubtless become the standard translation of the *Brevísima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*. --David Frye, University of Michigan

This is by far the best modern edition of the classic account of Las Casas. An excellent Introduction provides the background of the friar and the debates he engendered. Of equal value are the appendices with the royal legislation for protection of the conquered Amerindians, that are the true legacy of his polemical treatises. Excerpts from eyewitnesses of the conquest of Mexico provide students with food for thought and discussion. This is an excellent classroom edition that should be widely used." --Noble David Cook, author of *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650*

Franklin Knight is Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Professor of History, Johns Hopkins University, and the author of *The Caribbean: The Genesis of a Fragmented Nationalism* (Oxford) and *Slave Societies of the Caribbean* (Macmillan). Andrew Hurley is Professor of English, University of Puerto Rico, and the award-winning translator of numerous works of fiction and non-fiction including the *Collected Fictions of Jorge Luis Borges* (Viking) and several novels by Reinaldo Arenas.

My eyesight is excellent, so I don't wear glasses. However, I was disappointed and annoyed with the tight spacing and small print in this book, which is about the size of a New Times Roman 8 point font. That's slightly larger than what you'll find on a prescription bottle. The book is informative, exposing the cruelties that Spaniards inflicted on the New World's local populations. So, if you want to learn more about this fascinating and sadistic history, you'll probably enjoy this book, despite the small print. For anyone who is not familiar with old Spanish literature, which isn't too different from modern over-winded Spanish prose, you'll encounter long sentences that weave through more than a single subject and object. Example (p.23 ): "Yet since that wretched and accursed governor carried orders instructing that the aforesaid requerimientos be given, in order to justify them yet more (their being in themselves absurd, unreasonable, and most exceedingly unjust), he

commanded, or the thieves and robbers that he sent did so, when they resolved to go a-raiding and robbing in some village, while the Indians were in their villages or in their houses fearing no harm, and there, that night, they should read out the requerimientos to themselves, saying: `Caciques and Indians of this Terra Firma of such-and-such a village, we do hereby give you notice that there is a God and a pope, and a king of Castile who is the lord of these lands'." The two sentences that follow this quote trail off to nothing and left me scratching my head: "Come then to give him obedience, & c." And: "For if you do not, know ye that we shall wage war upon you, and shall slay you and capture you, &c." Forty-nine pages of introduction and explanations precede the 125 pages of las Casas' accounts, which also contain footnotes. Perhaps influenced by the old language style, the author/translator also likes long, weaving sentences. However, his long sentences aren't as numerous as las Casas'. Revealing historical atrocities is important, but it shouldn't be this painful to read. I would have preferred a truly modern translation.

I would have never chosen to read this...it was a required reading. It is a sickening depiction of a slaughter of 12 million innocents. Much like the Irish and more recently the Holocaust. It seems civilizations not learned a lesson.

Order this for my husband. He is into history big time. Said it was very interesting and informative. Will order more.

It is very heavily annotated, and that was not described in the notes of the product. Very dissapointed as I would like to make my own annotations but simply cannot do that over so many annotations already in the book.

Your school history books and the media do their best to reenforce the narrative that the ruling class wants us to believe. So take it upon yourself to become educated and informed on the realities behind the creation of the 'new world'. And, there's no better place to start than with De Las Casas' writings on the genocide and inhumane acts committed on the people who called this their home prior to the arrival of the European terrorist.

I thought I knew what I was getting into, but even though I'd braced myself the carnage and sick behavior described was hard to bear. The translation is excellent and very apt: by keeping the language in its period there is more of a connection, somehow. The evil that man can exhibit is very

clearly and urgently communicated by Las Casas. It makes one wonder about our species, and naturally one is led to think about more recent horrors that we have committed against each other. Yes, gold drove the Spanish insane and made their monstrous evil come out in all its true intensity, but the same evil lurks in all humans everywhere, and the thin membrane of civilization that covers it is all too easily torn away. The events that he witnessed could happen here tomorrow. A chilling account that more people should be aware of.

This is phony-baloney propaganda. Written 40 years after the events it recounts, and thousands of miles away from the location, this book still stands up well as a horrifyingly phantasmagoric portrait of colonization in the Columbus period and immediately afterwards. Today it is read mainly as atrocity porn, although some people naively use it as political propaganda (which was, to some extent, its original purpose). The obsessive themes of mutilation and torture seem to derive from late-medieval martyr hagiography. While the author spent some time in the Indies in the early 1500s, he cannot have been present at most of the events he describes. Therefore he is mainly relating gory campfire tales that he heard when he first arrived, mixed in with his own imaginative embellishments and vague geographical recollections of time in Cuba and elsewhere. The motivations of Las Casas for writing this pornographic drivel would certainly be a good subject for many books. But let's stop promoting this shoddy, ephemeral propaganda as "history." It's crap, it's phony, Las Casas wasn't there, and he had political agenda for writing this. End of treatise.

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