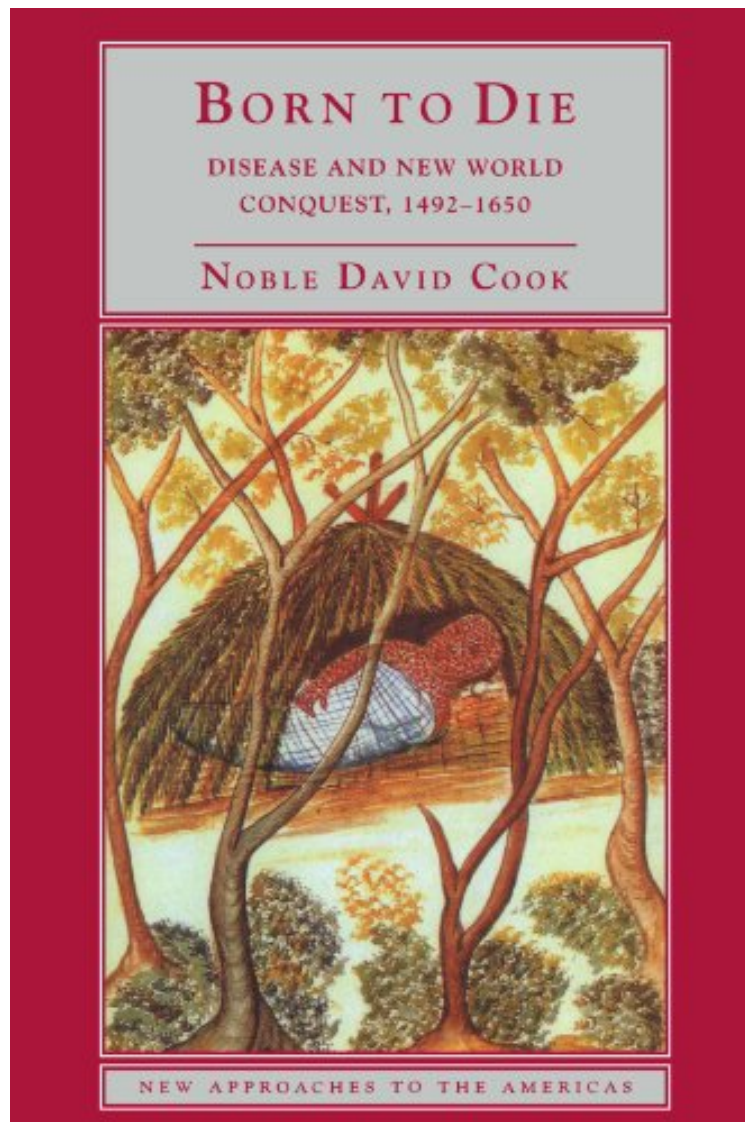


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## Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650 (New Approaches to the Americas)

*Noble David Cook*

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#562988 in Books Cambridge University Press 1998-02-13 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.98 x .67 x 5.981, .82 #File Name: 0521627303268 pages | File size: 68.Mb

**Noble David Cook : Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650 (New Approaches to the Americas)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650 (New Approaches to the Americas):

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1491-1650 By Dr.

Charles C. Kolb Noble David Cook, *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650*, New Approaches to the Americas series, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998. xv + 248 pp., 9 illustrations, 13 tables, 3 maps, bibliography, index. ISBN 0521622085 (hardcover), 0521627303 (paperback). Cook received his doctorate from the University of Texas in 1973 and currently is Professor of History at Florida International University, Miami, FL, specializing in Colonial Latin America, Early Modern Spain, and historical demography. This is one of 14 books that he has written and is, perhaps, the best known. The title, *Born to Die*, comes from the Maya region's *Annals of the Cakchiques, 1559-1581*. Among his other works are *Demographic Collapse: Indian Peru, 1520-1620* (1981) and *The Plague Files: Crisis Management in Sixteenth-Century Seville* (2012), coauthored with Alexandra Parma Cook. His CV is online at [...]. After nearly a quarter century, his 1998 volume remains the most comprehensive book by one or multiple authors on the history of New World diseases in North, Central, and South America, and the demographic collapse of Amerindian America. Indeed, there are many other articles and monographs that consider parts of the New World but none are as far-reaching; for example, Celia Maldonado Lopez's *Ciudad de Mexico, 1800-1860: epidemias y poblacion*, Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia, 1995) and Clark Spencer Larsen's edited *Native American Demography in the Spanish Borderlands* (1991). Geographer William Denevan's edited *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, 2nd ed. (1992) is dated as is Russell Thornton's *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492* (1987). In 1972, Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., now Professor Emeritus of History, Geography, and American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, proposed that Christopher Columbus's voyages to the New World produced catastrophic consequences. Crosby's publications in environmental and epidemiological history, all widely acclaimed, include *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972), *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (1986), and *Germs, Seeds, and Animals: Studies in Ecological History* (1994). His most recent work is *The Measure of Reality: Quantification and Western Society, 1250-1600* (1997). The biological mingling of the Old World and the western Hemisphere began with the first voyage of Columbus. This exchange would be a mixed blessing since the high mountain ranges and geographical isolation had resulted in limited biological diversity in the New World, especially for large mammals and germs and would lead ultimately to the extinction or demographic decimation of entire peoples in the Americas. When the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French explored and later settled areas previously occupied by Native Americans and as millions of African slaves were transported to the New World, there was a significant exchange of germs, crops, animals, and humans. In the early years of the conquest, both Native Americans and Europeans suffered from endemic diseases, but technological and military superiority allowed the Europeans to rapidly expand their terrestrial holdings. Native populations had never before experienced Eurasian illnesses, notably smallpox, measles, typhus, plague, influenza, malaria, and yellow fever, and initially died by the thousands and soon thereafter by the millions as waves of introduced diseases were introduced and Native Americans had no biological resistances. Demographic isolation proved not to be a significant barrier to these lethal diseases, and traditional native healing methods were inadequate. Cook's 1998 largely synthetic volume provides a splendid introduction and five well-written chapters, prior to his thoughtful conclusions. These chapters are: 1. "In the path of the hurricane: disease and the disappearance of the peoples of the Caribbean, 1492-1518" (a focus on Hispaniola, Columbus's second expedition, Mesoamerica, the background on Old World diseases, and quantifying Precolumbian populations); 2. "The deaths of Aztec Cuitlahuac and Inca Huayna Capac: the first New World pandemics" (Mesoamerica, the Andean region, Panama, and the 1518-1528 smallpox pandemic); 3. "Settling in: epidemics and conquest to the end of the first century" (serial and compound epidemics 1500-1545, 1557-1564, 1576-1591; the Basin); 4. "Regional outbreaks from the 1530s to century's end" (Mesoamerica, the Andean region, La Plata to Tierra del Fuego, coastal Brazil, southern North America, and St. Lawrence and Upper Mississippi river valleys); and 5. "New arrivals: peoples and illnesses from 1600-1650" (Mesoamerica, the Andes, coastal Brazil, New England, and New France). In sum, the coverage is from Hudson's Bay to Tierra del Fuego with notable gaps. *Born to Die* while mostly comprehensive in geographic scope also demonstrates where research on disease pathogens and paleodemographic studies had not been carried out by the late 1990s (notably the American Southwest, western Canada, and Alaska). He has prepared the best possible synthesis given the available demographic data, and, frankly, not much new information has been published over the past two decades. Cook deals with the range of diseases, regional death rates, and native responses, but less so with the scholarly controversies among historians, anthropologists, and geographers over the death rates. He employs mostly secondary rather than primary sources in composing his book and when surveying demographic disasters throughout the Americas, the narrative becomes a catalog of what other scholars have written and he is uncritical of his sources. Cook rightly concluded that diseases, rather than warfare, were responsible for the successful rapid expansion of the Spanish Empire in Mesoamerica and the Andean region. The volume remains the best account by a single author about the depopulation of the whole of the Americas in the sixteenth century. John W. Verano and Douglas H. Ubelaker's edited volume *Disease and Demography in the Americas* (1992) is the nearest "competitor." A new work, *Global History of Paleopathology: Pioneers and Prospects*, edited by Jane E. Buikstra and Charlotte A. Roberts, (2012) provides the best current coverage. .com is the place to go for these and other publications on these topics. 0 of 1 people found the following

review helpful. Good information. Needed book for paper for a graduate ...By Vicki MGood information. Needed book for paper for a graduate class.1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. TextbookBy Claudia CastilloRead this book as a textbook long ago and lost it. It is good to have it back. It is a clear account of the damage introduced to the New World by conquistadors.

Noble David Cook explains, in vivid detail and sweeping scope, how the conquest of the New World was achieved by a handful of Europeans--not by the sword, but by deadly disease. The Aztec and Inca empires with their teeming millions were destroyed by a few hundred Europeans whose most important weapons, though the conquerors did not realize it at the time, were diseases previously unknown in the Americas. The end result of the colonizing experience in the Americas, whether of the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, English, or French, was the collapse of native society.

"The book challenges the Black Legend, which attempts to place all of the blame for the injustices of conquest on the Spanish, to demonstrate how all Old World peoples carried, literally though unwittingly, the germs of the destruction of American civilization." UC MEXUS NEWS "...an important work that shows New World societies reeling from forces far beyond their control." Choice "The book's strength lies in the extensive use of primary data from the various libraries. Those interested in medical history will find this monograph a pleasant and informative source of information. Overall, I found *Born to Die* a fascinating work that will appeal to anyone interested in the social, economic, and medical history of the New World immediately after its discovery and conquest." Robert C. Kimbrough III, MD; JAMA "...[Cook] has produced a notable and well-written counterargument to some of the virulently anti-Spanish texts of the early 1990s." Foreign Affairs "This is an important book which needs to be read by all who are interested in understanding the catastrophe that confronted the Amerindian peoples..." William T. Walker, Sixteenth Century Journal "[*Born to Die*]...will become a standard reference in the literature of the European conquest of the Americas." J.H. Galloway, The International History "Whether one is an expert or not in the role of diseases in the conquest of the New World, this book will prove an enlightening addition to your collection." Michael T. Campbell, Revista Interamericana