



Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms

By Charles Hudson

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Between 1539 and 1542 Hernando de Soto led a small army on a desperate journey of exploration of almost four thousand miles across the Southeast. Until now, his path has been one of history's most intriguing mysteries. With *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun*, anthropologist Charles Hudson offers a solution to the question, "Where did de Soto go?" Using a new route reconstruction, for the first time the story of the de Soto expedition can be laid on a map, and in many instances it can be tied to specific archaeological sites.

Arguably the most important event in the history of the Southeast in the sixteenth century, De Soto's journey cut a bloody and indelible swath across both the landscape and native cultures in a quest for gold and personal glory. The desperate Spanish army followed the sunset from Florida to Texas before abandoning its mission. De Soto's one triumph was that he was the first European to explore the vast region that would be the American South, but he died on the banks of the Mississippi River a broken man in 1542.

Abundantly illustrated, *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun* is a clearly written narrative that unfolds against the exotic backdrop of a now extinct social and geographic landscape. Hudson masterfully chronicles both De Soto's expedition and the native societies he visited. A blending of archaeology, history, and historical geography, this is a monumental study of the sixteenth-century Southeast.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Hernando de Soto's tortuous and futile expedition, from 1539 to 1543, in search of imaginary cities of gold marked the first significant European penetration of what was to become the American South. In his previous work, coauthored with Jerald T. Milanich (*Hernando de Soto and the Indians of Florida*, LJ 1/93), he made use of the archaeological and documentary evidence to establish part of the long-debated route of this epic trek, as well as the "social geography" of the now extinct native peoples. In this long-anticipated study, the author completes in detail the story of the expedition, its route (which went as far as Texas), and the impact on the native chiefdoms. For the latter, contact with the Old World was an "unimaginable calamity," leading to a long decline brought about by military assault, subsequent destabilization, and epidemic disease. This scholarly work, written in an accessible narrative style is likely to be the definitive work on this subject; highly recommended for public and academic libraries. William F. Young, SUNY at Albany Lib.
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Review

The definitive work on this subject.

(Library Journal)

Hudson has brought alive the world changed by Hernando de Soto and the consequences for those whose home it was.

(Times Literary Supplement)

Hudson's masterful new book has raised the level of the discussion for all who will come after him, and he has made an invaluable contribution to the historical understanding of Native American life in the Southeast.

(Southern Cultures)

There is much to be learned from this volume. . . . [It] is likely to become the definitive work on the subject.

(Latin American Perspectives)

This book will stand as the most thorough analysis of the De Soto expedition produced since the 1930s.

(Vernon J. Knight Jr. coeditor of The De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando de Soto to North America in 1539-1543)

No scholar has spent more energy, enthusiasm and passion in following Governor-General de Soto across the South-East of the United States than Hudson has.

(Journal of European Economic History)

A book of great and lasting importance, making major contributions to geographic, ethnographic, and historical scholarship . . . by far the most persuasive approximation of De Soto's route.

(Mississippi Quarterly)

Hovering between specialized archaeological research and compelling lay history, this work is destined for textbook status in the field of de Soto studies, and may shift some roadside markers along the way.

(Oxford American)

Well organized, engaging, and pithy?a real pleasure to read. *(American Anthropologist)*

About the Author

Charles M. Hudson, a professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Georgia, is one of the foremost authorities on the history and culture of the Indians of the U.S. Southeast. His many books include *Black Drink*, *The Forgotten Centuries*, and *Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun* (all Georgia).

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