



# **Brutality and Benevolence: Human Ethology, Culture, and the Birth of Mexico (Contributions in Latin American Studies)**

*Abel A. Alves*

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The 16th-century conquest of Mexico and its effects are best understood as cultural manifestations of animal behavior patterns which humans share with other primates. While Nahuas and Spaniards can be distinguished on the basis of learned cultural differences, such differences only exaggerated particular expressions of the universal behavioral patterns they shared. Brutality and benevolence were used in the same way by both to establish hierarchy and cultural bonding. After the conquest, a new Mexican synthesis could be constructed because of these commonalities.

Alves explores the formation of that synthesis by examining such aspects of material culture as food, clothing, and shelter?especially as they manifest such universal primate tendencies as hierarchy, reciprocity, benevolence, brutality, xenophobia, curiosity, and territoriality. Alves proposes that humans are historically best understood by using current advances in the fields of primatology and ethology. This groundbreaking book will be of great interest to Latin Americanists, historians, and anthropologists.

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