



# Writing from the Edge of the World: The Memoirs of Darien, 1514-1527

*Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo*

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**Writing from the Edge of the World: The Memoirs of Darien, 1514-1527** Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo  
**A stirring account of Spain's incursion into the New World.**

Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo is the 16th-century author of *Historia general y natural de las Indias*, a general and natural history of the peoples and places he encountered in his travels to Spanish America. Oviedo was educated at the court of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and held several early appointments to the royal household, first as page to their son, John. In 1513, he accepted the appointment as warden of the gold mines of Castilla de Oro on the Isthmus of Panama in Darién, the first viable Spanish settlement on the American mainland. His first year at the very edge of the known world converted Oviedo into a lifelong resident of America and, more importantly, marked the beginning of his campaign to appropriate the topic of the Indies and become its interpreter to Europe.

As G. F. Dille points out in his introduction, this work earned Oviedo the title of many firsts—first historian, first ethnographer, first naturalist, first anthropologist, and first sociologist of the New World. Dille adds to that list first autobiographer and first novelist of the Americas.

This annotated translation contains the section of Oviedo's work that recounts his experience in the New World during his service in Panama. Dille includes a brief introduction to Oviedo and provides general information on the political background of Spain and on the Spanish colonial system, the printing history of the text, a description of the reception of Oviedo's work, and notes on the translation.

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