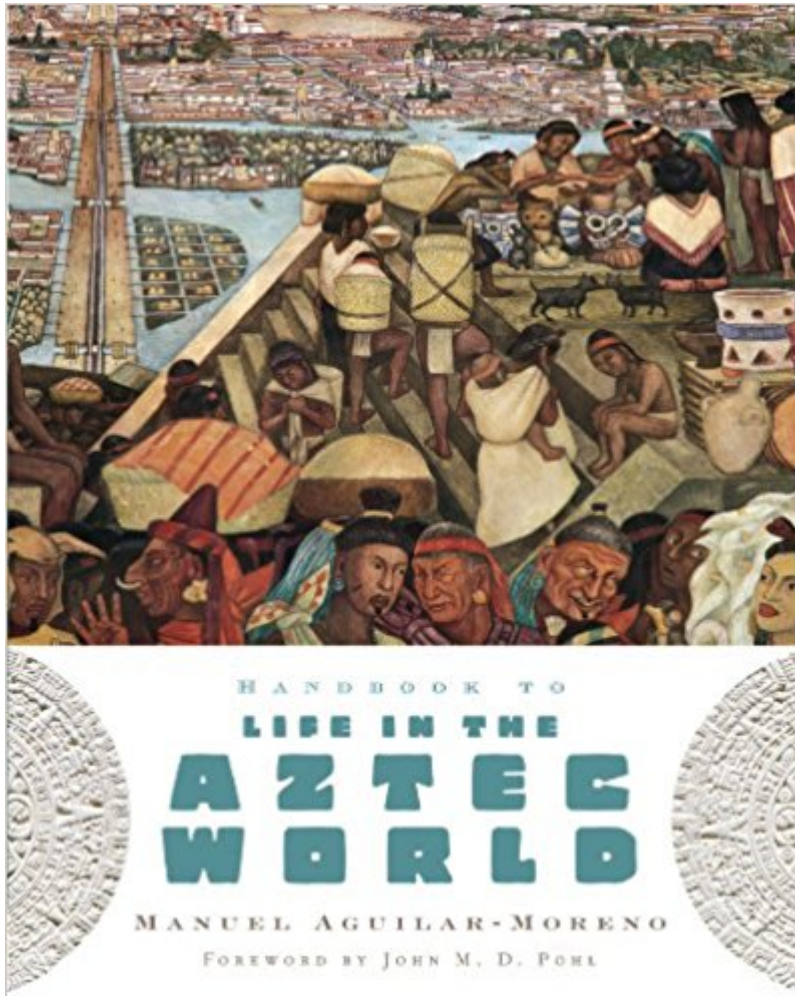




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# Handbook To Life In The Aztec World



## Synopsis

Since its violent dissolution in 1521, the Aztec Empire of Mexico has continually intrigued us. Recent discoveries resulting from the excavation of the Templo Mayor in the heart of Mexico City have taught us even more about this fascinating culture. The increasing recognition that the achievements of Mesoamerican civilizations were among the most sophisticated of the ancient world has led to a demand for introductions to the basic methods and theories of scholars working throughout the region. Handbook to Life in the Aztec World gathers the results from recent archaeological discoveries and scholarly research into a single accessible volume. Organized thematically, the handbook covers all aspects of life in the Aztec world: Mesoamerican civilizations and Aztec archeology; evolution of Aztec civilization; geography of the Aztec world; society and government; religion, cosmology, and mythology; funerary beliefs and customs; Aztec art; Aztec architecture; Nahuatl literature; the calendar, astronomy, and mathematics; economy, industry, and trade; daily life; the Aztec after conquest and today. Each chapter includes an extensive bibliography, and more than 165 original line drawings, photographs, and maps complement the text. Handbook to Life in the Aztec World provides all the essential information required by anyone interested in Aztec history or culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up – A comprehensive, engaging examination of Aztec history and culture based on recent archaeological discoveries and excavations in Mexico City. Meticulously organized

chapters present accessible information on such topics as geography, government, warfare, daily life, religion, architecture, economy, and astronomy. The readable format consists of two neatly spaced columns of text per page, with appropriate subdivisions and well-positioned visual matter. A plethora of instructive aids such as a bibliography in each chapter, line drawings, well-composed and -reproduced black-and-white photographs, and accurate maps enhances this authoritative work. A general bibliography, a list of museums containing relevant collections, a selection of Aztec poems, and a thorough index round out this resource. Michael E. Smith's *The Aztecs* (Blackwell, 2002) also provides a scholarly yet readable study of Aztec life, and it can be used as a supplement to this book. A remarkable look at the grandeur of an ancient civilization. --Hillary Jan Donitz-Goldstein, formerly at New York Public Library Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This entry in Facts On File's Handbooks to Life series is, as far as layout and design, typical of the series. It is arranged topically rather than dictionary-style, but it has a good index. Illustrations consist of line drawings and small photographs, and there are a few maps. There is a pronunciation guide for Nahuatl terms, which is very helpful. Facts are dependably presented, and there is a long bibliography. Fourteen chapters cover topics such as "Geography of the Aztec World," "Warfare," "Aztec Architecture," and "Economy, Industry, and Trade." Each chapter is broken down into easily identified subentries; the chapter "Religion, Cosmology, and Mythology," for example, has sections on the structure of the Aztec universe, the main Aztec myths, the Aztec gods, rituals, and human sacrifice. The topical approach results in some repetition; for example, the chinampas, or floating gardens, that provided the Aztecs with more arable land are described in several places in the text. The writing is fairly academic. Aguilar-Moreno is an associate professor of art history at California State University, Los Angeles, and his interest in art makes the chapters on art, architecture, and literature a substantial part of the work. He spends nearly as much time on the provenance of surviving Aztec codices as he does on the content of the literature. The chapter on architecture has a city-by-city description of major surviving Aztec architecture. The life of the people, on the other hand, is crowded into a single chapter on "Daily Life." A final chapter summarizes post-conquest Aztec contributions to Mexican society. One of the highlights at the end of the book is an appendix of Aztec poems in English. Suitable for larger public libraries and academic libraries with undergraduate courses in Mesoamerican history, this volume complements *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures: The Civilizations of Mexico and South America* (2001). Kathleen Stipek Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers

to the Hardcover edition.

great job

Great Product Thank You

love it

The most comprehensive guide of Aztec life in English I have ever come across. This book is not to be missed if you like precolombian culture

Most people know at least two things about the Aztecs: that they practiced human sacrifice, and that they were conquered by the Spanish around 1520. Aguilar-Moreno's Handbook presents a fuller spectrum of Aztec life, by showing them as warriors, priests, astronomers, artists, merchants, and farmers. The book is organized by topic, with separate chapters on Aztec history, government, religion, trade, architecture, and so on. The book includes a good bibliography with inline citations, and an extensive index. There is quite a bit of repetition in the book, although this does help to make the chapters more self-contained; each one is almost a little mini-book in its own right. Although not quite for beginners, the book is approachable by general readers, and its writing is blessedly free of academic jargon. Be prepared to learn an amazing number of Nahuatl words, though. All illustrations and photos are in black and white only. This is especially a problem in the chapter on Aztec art. This chapter mostly discusses individual objects in the Mexico City museum, but its black-and-white photos are so small and blurry that it is impossible to follow along with the text. In fact, several objects discussed in the text are not even illustrated at all. If you mostly want to look at Aztec art, then this is not the book for you. Otherwise, it is a good resource - especially at its bargain paperback price - for university-level students, professionals, and other interested readers. I learned quite a bit that I did not know before, from the small but interesting details (the Aztecs poisoned their arrows with the juice of decayed pineapples) to larger questions about meaning, purpose, and sacrifice that still resonate today.

This first-rate resource on the lives of the Aztec Indians covers just about every aspect of their society in both breadth and depth, from the physical terrain of the Aztec world to the structure of society, the nobility and the priesthood and the warrior classes, Aztec history and myths, trade and

the merchant class, and the lives of the peasantry. Each chapter ends with suggestions for further reading, which makes this a comprehensive work. There are areas of great interest to the modern reader which are quite slight, though, as only 5 pages for the role of women in Aztec society, or only 4 pages of Aztec poetry, which I felt could have been much fleshed out from what is here. That said, what is here is quite well documented and thorough. The Aztecs were a military society, and their military lives get in-depth treatment in this book, as does their history of conquest and sacrifice. Aztec mythology is explored in enough depth to give you the flavor of it in all its nastiness, and the arts get a couple of chapters as well. The section on Aztec poetry is fiercely evocative of this lost civilization's poetic tastes and gives you just enough samples to make you really, really wish there was ten times as much of this material. I wanted more mythology as well, and more pictures of Aztec artworks. What is here is an excellent introduction to the Aztecs, well-grounded and far-ranging, and I guess it did its job in making me want more. Now on to some of the supplementary reading, and more of the Aztecs!

I would recommend this book to anyone wanting a comprehensive (and albeit at times redundant) overview of Aztec life from the founding of the Empire to details regarding military rank and even mythology. The only problem I had with it, besides the occasional feeling of presentational clumsiness, were the outright factual errors he makes -- I couldn't give it more than 4 stars because of this. For instance, in the section "The Process of Becoming a Huey Tlatoani", he says: "There was one important condition to becoming a huy tlatoani: One must first be a tlaceteccatl. The tlaceteccatl was a position on the supreme council made up of four brothers or relatives of the tlatoani. The tlaceteccatl, together with the tlacochcalcat were the highest military commanders...". While he is correct that this council consisted of four persons and that the tlaceteccatl and tlacochcalcat positions were two of the highest commanding positions (militarily) after the Cihuacoatl he is completely wrong about the requirement of an Emperor to be a Tlaceteccatl as an eligibility prerequisite. Such a notion is completely and utterly inconsistent with the fact that the Tlacochochcalcat position was in fact higher than the Tlaceteccatl -- Even the Mendoza illustration shows very clearly the Tlacochochcalcatl as being the largest of the four portrayed, denoting his importance and hence seniority. What is more probably true is that the tlacochcalcatl position was esteemed as a prerequisite to becoming huey tlatoani. Even the wikipedia entry on Tlacochochcalcat confirms that it was in fact the highest of the 4 positions (meaning "high general"), at least in terms of military command. Tlaceteccatl being the equivalent of a "general", although obviously an extremely prestigious position. What we do know for sure is that several Emperors,

including Ahuitzotl and Motecuhzoma II had both served as Tlacochohcalcatl prior to becoming Emperor (some served as Tlaceteccatl as well before being promoted to Tlacochohcalcatl before finally getting elected Emperor). It is possible that this is coincidental and that the Emperor was simply chosen from one of the four, although I don't have evidence to say with certainty. Another error is that when describing the xihuitzolli (royal turquoise diadem of the emperor) he calls it a "copilli" which is incorrect. A copilli, from my understanding, can describe other headdresses but not the royal turquoise crown itself. It also seemed a little ridiculous that he felt the need to almost word for word lift Pohl's description of Angus McBride's Aztec Emperor illustration (from plate 1 of "Aztec, Mixtec & Zapotec Armies -- Osprey publishing). It certainly felt a little tacky, if not outright sloppy. The other embarrassing moment in his book is the part where he is describing the Tlaceteccatl by misappropriating Pohl's description of the Cihuacoatl in times of military command (illustrated by Angus McBride on plate 1 of "Aztec Mixtec and Zapotec Armies" -- Osprey publishing). He then refers to the Mendoza council of four to supposedly corroborate his description only for us to see as plain as day that they are nothing alike. Apart from those complaints I really enjoyed his book and he does cover a lot in great detail and accuracy, but it could have felt a little more organic and verified.

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