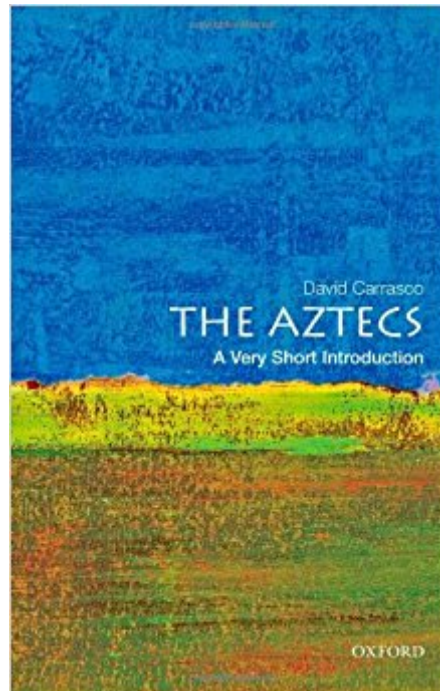




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The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

This Very Short Introduction employs the disciplines of history, religious studies, and anthropology as it illuminates the complexities of Aztec life. Readers meet a people highly skilled in sculpture, astronomy, city planning, poetry, and philosophy, who were also profoundly committed to cosmic regeneration through the thrust of the ceremonial knife and through warfare. David Carrasco looks beyond Spanish accounts that have colored much of the Western narrative to let Aztec voices speak about their origin stories, the cosmic significance of their capital city, their methods of child rearing, and the contributions women made to daily life and the empire. Carrasco discusses the arrival of the Spaniards, contrasts Aztec mythical traditions about the origins of their city with actual urban life in Mesoamerica, and outlines the rise of the Aztec empire. He also explores Aztec religion, which provided both justification for and alternatives to warfare, sacrifice, and imperialism, and he sheds light on Aztec poetry, philosophy, painting, and especially monumental sculpture and architecture. He concludes by looking at how the Aztecs have been portrayed in Western thought, art, film, and literature as well as in Latino culture and arts.

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Customer Reviews

David Carrasco is the Neil L. Rudenstine Professor of the Study of Latin America at Harvard University. For his scholarship in Mesoamerican religions and his work on Mexican American culture he received the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle.

A brief and extremely readable summary of various aspects of the history and culture of the

Mexica. It does have to achieve a broad overview of the cultural and religious history of the Mexica, but it is so broad that the reader may have a hard time contacting. That said, the further reading section is excellent to build on knowledge gained and the liberal use of primary sources in translation largely compensate for the breadth of the material covered.

Exactly what it says, brief but informative

Good

as expected

Have you ever wanted to know how the Aztecs shaped the modern era? I picked up a book from the library that might help you with finding the knowledge you are looking for. The Aztecs: A Very Short Introduction by David Carrasco in a brief one hundred thirty five page book that goes into depth about the Aztec culture. The book is an in depth view into the culture from the start of the Aztec rule to the very last day of their rein. Throughout High School I have never been a super big reader, but I actually really enjoyed this book. The book does have some longer words and does take some prior knowledge about history, but it is a pretty easy read. This is not the most action packed or most exciting book, but if you have a thirst for knowledge this is a book for you. This book is only one of dozens of many book doing the same with other ancient empires with stories and comparing cultures. This is one book I would recommend to anyone I know. I will be sure to find more books by David Carrasco and look forward to the new information I will learn. I would recommend anyone to check this author out.

This book has a lot of good information, but it's not where I'd recommend starting. Carrasco spends too much time on the history of European-Western perceptions of the Mexica, even discussing Erich von Danekin's crackpot alien theories at one point. Since most of these European-Western perceptions are totally ignorant, as Carrasco agrees, they waste valuable space in this short book. Maybe I'm not the target audience for this book, but if you're reading this review, you probably aren't either. Carrasco sometimes engages in long passages of weasel words like this: "That the Aztecs practiced ritual human sacrifice is beyond doubt, but it is also clear that Spanish chroniclers exaggerated the numbers and purposes of these sacrifices as a strategy to justify their own conquests and prodigious violence against Mesoamerican men, women, and children. Scholarship

also reveals that many ancient cultures including the Romans, Greeks, Japanese, Chinese, Africans, Andeans, and Egyptians practiced human sacrifice, often in very large numbers. Even though the Aztec image in Western thought ranks them as the biggest sacrificers in the world, there is no substantial archaeological or documentary proof that they ritually killed more people than other civilizations."Carrasco then spends twenty pages talking about Mexica human sacrifice, far more than you'd find on most introductory books on the Romans, Greeks, etc. You can't have it both ways. (Likewise, he announces "Mexica" as more accurate than "Aztec" at the beginning of the book but goes on to use "Aztec" anyway.)To be fair, there is "no substantial proof" for *many* things about the Mexica, but scholarly hypotheses have tended toward seeing Mexica culture as more oriented around human sacrifice than, for example, the Inca. Why couldn't he say that? He correctly says that the physically impossible account of sacrificing 80,000 warriors in 4 days is almost certainly false, but he attributes it to Spanish propaganda "to justify their conquests," neglecting to mention that the figure comes from Diego Duran, one of the Spaniards *most* sympathetic to the Mexica (he learned Nahuatl), preferring to convert them rather than kill them. It's imperialism either way, but Carrasco tramps on the details. Instead, I'd recommend

- The Aztecs, Inga Clendinnen's speculative but gripping
- Aztecs: An Interpretation, the older
- The Aztecs, a History, and the even older
- Daily Life of the Aztecs (Native American)

helpful. Definitely a good purchase. I was looking for a replacement for my chef's product and this looks to be a really well made product. Its sharp, with a nice weight to it. Will definitely recommend to anyone looking for a good product at a reasonable price. Nice and valuable. for Tina , arrive on time.

My review is not about the content of the book but about the production of the audiobook. If ever there were a time not to use a computerized reader, a book about the Aztecs in English is it. The pronunciation of the names of gods, people, and cities in this reading is not only incorrect, it is also distracting and hard to listen to. I think this is worth mentioning because it was a missed opportunity to help newcomers with pronunciation and because, since the book is so short, it's hard to understand the value of paying for the audiobook in this case.

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