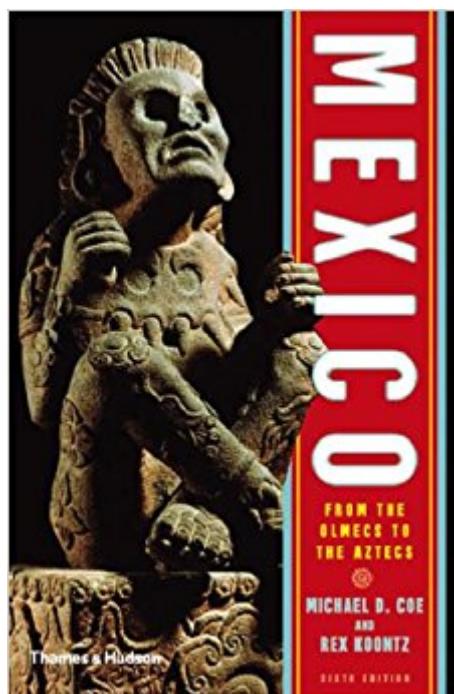


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# **Mexico: From The Olmecs To The Aztecs (Sixth Edition) (Ancient Peoples And Places)**



## Synopsis

"Masterly....The complexities of Mexico's ancient cultures are perceptively presented and interpreted." Library Journal Michael D. Coe's Mexico has long been recognized as the most readable and authoritative introduction to the region's ancient civilizations. This companion to his best-selling *The Maya* has now been completely revised by Professor Coe and Rex Koontz. The sixth edition includes new developments in the birth of agriculture and writing, both of which were independently invented here. Fresh insights into the metropolis of Teotihuacan reveal a world of palaces and warrior cults brought down by social revolts. A spectacular new find in the center of the Aztec capital, just unearthed, gives us a privileged glimpse into the funerary rites of the most powerful monarch in North America at the time. 181 illustrations, 20 in color

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Manuel's review of this book is excellent - I couldn't have written it any better! However, here's my two-cents worth: This book is a must read for anyone who lacks basic knowledge of the ancient Mexican cultures. It provides the reader with brief (and in some cases, more than brief) summaries of several of the various cultural groups that existed, covering geographic, cultural, agricultural, religious, architectural and political backgrounds. It has timelines and drawn maps to aid the reader's temporal and geographical orientation. It contains many illustrations and photographs of artifacts found, temples, statues...etc. excavated. It even includes a brief section and tips on visiting Mexico. The only gripe I have with this book is that it provides you with a lot of information on some

cultures, such as the Aztecs and Toltecs and leaves you with insufficient info on other cultures mentioned, such as the Totonacs. However, this is probably because what archeologists have unearthed of Mesoamerica is only a tiny fraction of what actually existed, i.e. the less than brief information on some of the cultural groups mentioned in this book is probably due to archeologists not having unearthed enough remnants of the existence of these cultures/not being able to fully interpret or place what they have found to date. I'm sure Coe would have provided more info if there was more in-depth info, though in the case of the Maya, there is simply too much information to be made known and hence, rather than trying to simplify everything into one chapter, a whole, separate book has been dedicated to that group. To make up for this lack of info on some groups, Coe provides us with pictures of artifacts found, as in the section on the Olmecs, and illustrations and descriptions of their distinctive artistic/architectural style and states the likelihood of the origination of these styles and what they probably signified. I must admit that I found the more than just brief descriptions/concentrations on the artistic styles/pottery work/architectural preferences...etc. of some of the lesser-known groups a little annoying, for I am not an art/archeology student and was looking for info more on the way of life, beliefs...etc. than on their pottery and carving skills and architectural styles. Nonetheless, I am grateful that these were brought to the reader's attention rather than nothing at all mentioned. I enjoyed this book as a kick-start to my growing interest in ancient Mexican and Andean cultures and think that it makes a good quick-reference book. At least now I have an idea/starting point of some of the ancient Mexican groups. One should read this book keeping in mind that a lot about ancient Mexico has yet to be discovered and will never be discovered (afterall, a majority of the remnants of these cultures were destroyed by conquering forces) and thus, should be thankful for whatever is divulged in this book.

I have been reading books on pre-Columbian America for over 20 years, and Michael Coe's titles have always been amongst my favorites. He has not disappointed me this time either. This book is a great summary of what is known, to date, about pre-hispanic Meso America. Good reading, good archeology.

I was a little disappointed in Reading "Mexico". I was hoping to read about the ancient peoples of Mexico and what their daily lives must have been like as well as their history, ways of life, beliefs, etc.. however this book was mainly focuses on archeological excavation sights and the artifacts and goes into great detail of the finds. This is all good and actually very informative for those interested in archeology alone. The book occasionally does touch on the Peoples themselves. Also,

it is written in a very dry and sometimes dull and a high-brow manner which was also a turn-off to me. I recommend it though for the purpose of the many illustrations and photos (the most interesting parts) and a must read for those interested in archeology.

This is a simple and easy to use reference to the archeological history of Mexico. Simply laid out with lots of examples. Good book.

This book makes it clear that the bulk of Mexican history (and Central America) has NOTHING at all to do with Europeans or anything "Latin American." In fact, only 5 centuries of Mexico's archeological history has any European trace, vs. 28,000 years of indigenous Mexican occupation. Michael Coe tells the story of Mexico through its common denominator: the indigenous people, the "Indians." Dr. Coe shows that Mexico is more than just the Aztecs with whom we are most familiar. He presents a breath-taking parade of pyramid-civilizations going back 4,000 YEARS: Olmec, Tlatilco, Cuiculco, Izapan, Teotihuacan, Zapotec, Mixtec, Tarasco, Toltec, Huaxtec, El Tajin, Pipil, Western Mexico, Zacatecas, Chalchihuites, Cacaxtla, Xochicalco, Chichen Itza, Nicaraao and the multi-layered "Maya". He even includes the Casas Grandes civilization near the Texas border. Prof. Coe presents recent archeology showing that Mexico had developed the elements of a true civilization between 2300 B.C. - 1800 B.C. This Olmec Civilization predates the Jewish presence in Israel and occurred before there was a single town or city in all of Western Europe. (By the time Solomon built the First Temple in Isreal in 960 B.C., the Olmec capital at San Lorenzo was already over 400 years old.) Coe's book is unique in that it presents Mexico's history through an objective long view, and not merely through the ethnocentric cultural lens of Europeans. He presents a refreshing analysis of Mexico that does not use the Spanish Invasion as the starting point (he hardly mentions the Spanish at all until the very end). European divisions are not the way to understand Mexico's history, just as British imperial definitions do not do justice to the understanding of the Irish people. Coe delves deeply into the incredible creation of corn domestication 9,000 years ago in Mexico. The corn plant requires human intervention, and the ingenuity of ancient Mexican farmers gave rise to one of the world's most unique and vigorous civilizations, just as wheat did for Iraq, and rice did for China. Coe demonstrates, that unlike Europe, Mexico did not "borrow" new technologies and ideas from established foreign cultures (i.e. writing, agriculture, mathematics, religion, gunpowder, architecture, political structures, etc). This isolation makes Mexico's achievements all the more impressive, Dr. Coe asserts, making it one of the 3 or 4 "pristine civilizations" in the world (i.e. Iraq & China). Modern Mexico is really an artificial political concept, historically speaking. The modern

boundaries have only existed for 150 years and as late as 1823, Central America was part of Mexican territory. And until 1848, Mexico included everything from Texas to California. This book shows that this history is not confined to the Rio Grande nor to Mexico's border with Guatemala. He includes "The Turquoise Road" trade relations with the U.S. Southwest and discusses the "transmission of Mesoamerican traits" into that area, using the Hopi as an example. Coe does a great job of presenting several satellite states of these great civilizations as well, such as the incredible influence of Mexico's mightiest civilization: Teotihuacan, whose pyramid city (larger than the city of Rome at its height) is today Mexico's #1 tourist attraction. Considering that Mexico lacked metallurgy until after 800 AD, it is astonishing to behold the thousands of temple-pyramids, hundreds of ceremonial centers, and hundreds of towns and cities that indigenous Mexicans created across the land-- WITHOUT METAL TOOLS or draft animals. Europeans had animals like oxen and horses to do work for them, but Mexicans had only human muscle and no oxen, hence the lack of use for the wheel. Our indigenous people call the land AnÁhuac, meaning "the land between the waters" in the still-living Nahuatl language. Just as there is something historically known as "Christendom" or "Western Civilization" (oddly enough, both are based upon non-Western achievements in Sumeria and Egypt). As the reader of both of the recent editions of "Mexico" and "The Maya" will also learn, there was a unitary and common cultural matrix which connected and sustained all the cultures of Mexico and Central America down to Costa Rica. The divisions were far more political than cultural, just as in "Christendom" or the the modern European world. I wish that Dr Coe would have addressed the similarities of the "Moundbuilder" civilization across the Eastern United States which built flat-topped pyramid structures with a temple at the top, astronomically aligned. These "Pyramids of the Mississippi" are so similar to Mexican pyramids that it warrants an investigation into cross-cultural contact. (In fact, the Natchez people of Mississippi to this day maintain the story of ancient Mexicans passing through their lands, and is recorded by a French explorer a few centuries ago.) Another small gripe I have with this the book is Coe's insistence on the "gods" school of thought, when we know from Spanish and Nahuatl records that there existed the Toltec concept of One Single God, Ometeotl, of which all the other "gods" are really manifestations/emanations. I thought a little more time could have been spent connecting those theological dots. Coe acknowledges the existence of their Supreme Duality named OMETEOTL. But he continues to use the Spanish interpretation of "deities" instead of the notion of Manifestations of OMETEOTL, according to the High Priest tradition of the Aztec/Texcoco state alliance. (and for the Maya this One God who is the Many is called HUNAB-KU.) Christians are able to accept the concept of a Three-In-One God (Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit), along with deified Saints, a multitude of

demons, Mary the Mother, and Satan the Lord of Hell...and yet Christians still consider themselves to be Monotheists who don't believe in different gods. But hey, the "gods angle" sells a lot more books to a Western audience who seems to delight in the notion of "Aztec polytheism" while ignoring blatant Christian polytheism (The Trinity, the Saints, demons, angels, The Devil). A lot of this rich and impressive history has only recently been gleaned from what are it's "leftovers". 95% of the astronomical almanacs and encyclopedias were burned by the Spaniards, by their own admission and only 40 years ago did serious archeological finds occur. What other wonders went up in those flames?! What else lies beneath the surface? This is a fascinating history that reads like a real-life detective story. Buy the book! I love how Dr. Coe ends the book showing that modern indigenous culture still lives on in Mexico today. He didn't assign them a "dead" status like other books. Well done, Dr. Coe.

Did not use this book, however, I did get an opportunity to read some of the pages of this text. A good read for anyone. Thank you, Julia I. Chapman

Required text book for my Anthropology Course; I received an "A" in the course; thank you so much, great book.

I got this on the right time. It was in perfect shape with perfect covered up envelop when it was delivered. There are nothing more that I can say because I am pretty sure that everyone would love it if they order it. Thank you so much.

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