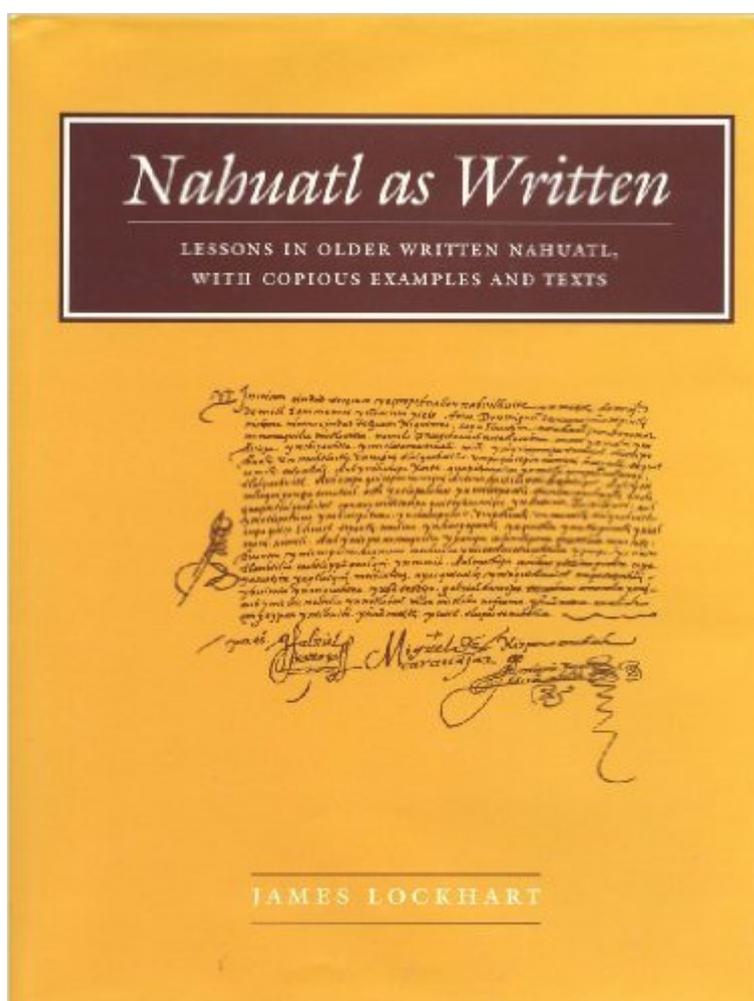


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Nahuatl As Written: Lessons In Older Written Nahuatl, With Copious Examples And Texts (Contraversions Jews And Other Differences (Paperback))



Synopsis

Nahuatl was the primary native language of central Mexico both before and after the Spanish conquest. It is the Latin of the indigenous languages of the New World. Its tradition of alphabetic writing goes back to the middle years of the sixteenth century and embraces not only grammars, dictionaries, collections of preconquest lore, and works of religious instruction, but also, above all, a great mass of mundane writing by the Nahuas themselves for their own purposes. Though the past quarter century has seen a flourishing of ethnohistorical, philological, and grammatical studies based on this corpus, those interested in the world of Nahuatl texts still find access to it difficult. James Lockhart, an eminent historian of early Latin America, is also perhaps the leading interpreter of this large body of work. He has translated and edited a wide range of texts, analyzed their cultural and linguistic implications, and over the years trained a large number of students, several of whom have gone on to become well known scholars of Nahuatl and other indigenous languages. Lockhart's main tools of instruction were: (1) a gradually growing set of lessons consisting primarily of examples culled from many sources of the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries (or concocted in the spirit of that time), and (2) the grammar or *Arte* of Nahuatl published in Spanish by the Florentine Jesuit Horacio de Carochi in 1645. In small groups of students, with a maximum of personal instruction and discussion, these materials accomplished their purpose, but the lessons were only in skeletal form, and the Carochi grammar, too, in the Spanish editions available, needed extensive explanation. Now, Lockhart has organized and expanded these materials into volumes that can be understood by students working alone or used in organized Nahuatl classes. The two books together will allow any seriously interested person to master Nahuatl sufficiently to begin reading the texts, and they will provide essential reference works as one progresses. They are geared primarily to the older form of the language and its written texts, but they can also be extremely useful to those studying the spoken Nahuatl of later times. Nahuatl as Written presumes no previous knowledge of the language. Treating all essential features of Nahuatl, it is organized on purely pedagogical principles, using techniques developed over many years of practical teaching experience. The book is in large format, almost like a workbook, with a great abundance of examples that serve as exercises; the examples are also available separately for the student's convenience. The orthography and vocabulary are those found in texts of the time, and the last several of the twenty lessons give the student training in working with texts as they were actually written. Some of the lessons deal with syntax in a way not found elsewhere and develop notions of anticipation and crossreference that are basic to Nahuatl grammar. In line with Lockhart's wish to bring more people into the Nahuatl documentary world, an Epilogue surveys many of the

published Nahuatl texts and an Appendix presents substantial selections from ten different texts. Carochi's 1645 Grammar is the most influential work ever published on Nahuatl grammar and remains an essential work of reference. The best recent grammars of Nahuatl are based on it, but they have not exhausted it. It includes an extensive discussion of adverbial expressions and particles that is found nowhere else, as well as an irreplaceable fund of authentic examples from the time, translated by a contemporary. Though a facsimile edition is available, the original is very difficult to read, and only a few experts can fully understand the seventeenth-century Spanish and Latinate grammatical terms. This new edition presents the original Spanish and an English translation on facing pages. Helpful footnotes provide explanatory comment

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Customer Reviews

This book provides a fantastic introduction to Nahuatl. The book provides excellent explanations of Nahuatl grammar and uses, from the very start, (as promised) a large number of examples of sentences or phrases to illustrate the grammatical points covered in each lesson. The book is intended to be an introduction covering the major points of Nahuatl grammar. A few actual texts are provided in the back for work upon completion of the lessons, and there are a few complex and esoteric topics in grammar that Lockhart leaves the reader to investigate with the help of Horacio Carochi's Grammar (available in the dual-language edition translated and annotated by Lockhart). Together with Carochi's grammar, this book should prepare the student for reading Nahuatl texts.

Here are the strengths:- Great dictionary that breaks down terms into their morphemes and shows vowel length and glottal stops.- Nice format, very readable.- Lots of example texts illustrating grammatical forms.- Good discussion about the language in it's various stages.- Not a dumbed down learn-a-language book. Takes a somewhat rigorous linguistic perspective and has a great discussions about language mechanics and even addresses etymology.- Talks about the evolution of the language and provides texts in various historic stages.- Talks about the Spanish influence on the language. Just two things that would have been an improvement:- Outside of the dictionary, very little of the book acknowledges vowel length or glottal stops. Granted the historic texts themselves ignore these non-Spanish aspects of the language, and the point of the book is to be able to read historic texts, but these aspects of the language are critical in many cases to understanding, so they should be indicated in each example. The traditional readers and writers of the language already knew these aspects and could derive them within a sentence from context. It's difficult for a novice to do this.- Also, why not just provide a small tabular grammar? It would not have occupied more than a few pages and would have been extremely convenient.

For all who desire to learn to read this language in the written form as it was written in the early post-Conquest era, this is as good as anything I've looked at, and I examined several others in detail. The logical, progressive way in which Lockhart helps the student to build upon his understanding is masterful. Highly recommend.

This book would be more readable for an accomplished student of Linguistics. It has many details that are barriers for the beginner in study of Nahuatl but is a very complete exposition of subtle grammatical processes that are not even approached in other grammars. I am happy that it is part of my library and expect that it will assist me as I continue to learn the language.

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