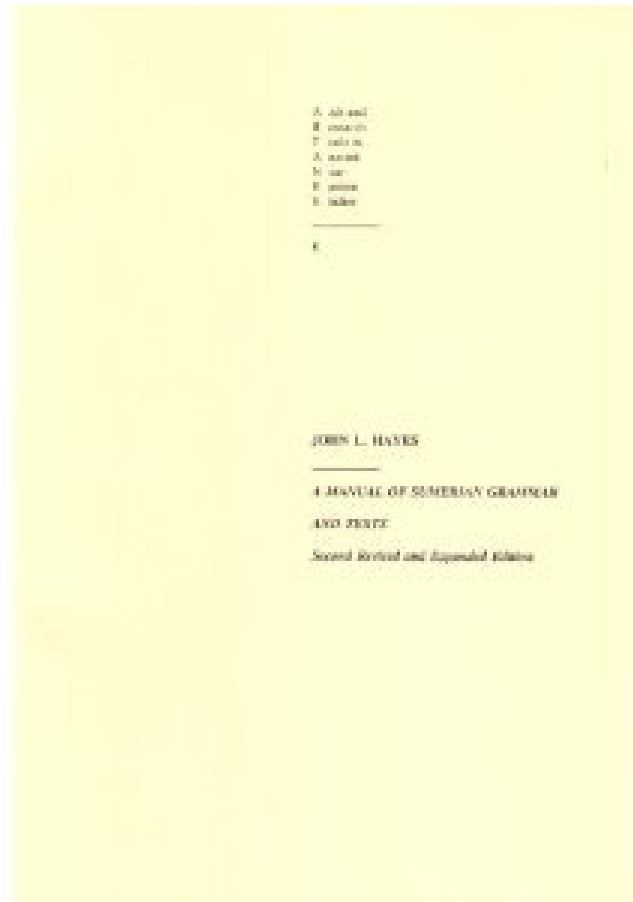


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controversial, heavy at times, but v good

By Jonathan

The book is controversial. In part, this is because not many complete texts exist. In part, it is because Assyriology is studied by only a few people (all of whom know each other on first-surname terms). Sumerian is a tiny, tiny, nearly infinitesimal fraction of that. Divide a few by a lot and it's easy to see why there's a problem.

This means that all books on Sumerology will make assumptions that you should be wary of. Some more than others, as some aspects are better studied. You do not need to know the nuances of Sumerian to translate the poems and stories of Inanna, or the epic of Gilgamesh, but obviously the more you know the richer the translations can be without silly mistakes.

As a guide to one of the paths Sumerologists have explored, this book is great. It has a lot of detail, key information on writing styles, the grammar, etc. It goes into all this in intense depth, so make a backup copy of your brain first.

It is not "the definitive guide" because there isn't one. It is one interpretation of the extant data, there are other books that are equally valid interpretations of the same data which differ on many points. No matter what you get, keep an open mind. If you get this with an eye to becoming an archaeologist in that region, be prepared to write the next edition.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

This is exactly where hobbyists like myself need to start

By E.Temen.Ni.Guru

This is exactly where hobbyists like myself need to start, presuming of course you already know Akkadian. This manual will not, however, complete your knowledge of Sumerian, but is a very good introduction in terms of both Grammar and orthography. Its deductive method of explaining morphology and syntax in the contexts actual tablets or inscriptions is a very good hands-on learning experience, and its commentary is very elaborate in explaining its various points. Once you have read, reviewed and memorized the grammar, one should then move on to D. Otto Edzard's "Sumerian" grammar.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

A Splendid Introduction to Sumerian

By Geoffrey B

(This review is for the first edition.)

In the Manual of Sumerian, Hayes starts you off with a good introduction to what you're getting yourself into, in terms of signs, in terms of grammar and in terms of studying a language that is not fully understood even by its finest scholars. Once you hop into the lessons, though, the language comes fast. Other reviewers have noted how often you find yourself reading the same sentence, but given that the texts are drawn mostly from inscriptions this is hardly a surprise. It's not as though building cornerstones are generally used for avant-garde literature. However, there's something reassuring in this. It's genuinely neat to be four or five chapters in, flip ahead a little and discover you have some sense of what the text is about, even though you can also tell that you'd really better do the chapters in the middle to fill in the gaps.

The one warning to give about this text is that with relatively limited content, you won't be learning the whole of the language. You'll be learning, as I indicated, to read standard inscriptions. If you're wandering about a Sumerian site and find an as yet unnoticed brick, you'll have a good shot at understanding whether it came from a temple, a bridge or a palace, who ordered its construction and which god it was dedicated to. If you find a tablet with a missing part of an old Gilgamesh story, you're going to need some help. That said, this is a wonderful introduction, all the more wonderful because you get both a lot of insight into the language and the experience of looking at ancient inscriptions and knowing, almost at a glance, what they're about.

For anyone who wants to find out what Sumerian is all about, I would highly recommend this as the place to start.

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