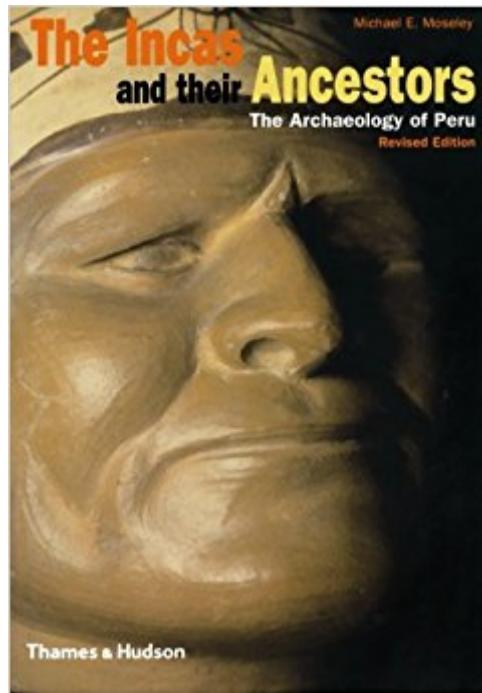


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The Incas And Their Ancestors: The Archaeology Of Peru (Revised Edition)



Synopsis

In 1532, when Pizarro conquered Peru, the Inca realm was one of the largest empires on earth, graced by gold masterpieces, towns with great palaces and temples, and an impressive network of roads. But this glittering culture only obscured the rich and diverse civilizations that had preceded it: Chavin, Moche, Nazca, Tiwanaku, Huari, and Chimu. Described as a "masterly study" and an "outstanding volume" on its first publication, *The Incas and Their Ancestors* quickly established itself as the best general introduction to the cultures and civilizations of ancient Peru. Now this classic text has been fully updated for the revised edition. New discoveries over the last decade are integrated throughout. The occupation of Peru's desert coast can now be traced back to 12,000 BC and ensuing maritime adaptations are examined in early littoral societies that mummified their dead and others that were mound builders. The spread of Andean agriculture is related to fresh data on climate, and protracted drought is identified as a recurrent contributor to the rise and fall of civilizations in the Cordillera. The results of recent excavations enliven understanding of coastal Moche and Nazca societies and the ancient highland states of Huari and Tiwanaku. Architectural models accompanying burials provide fresh interpretations of the palaces of imperial Chan Chan, while the origins of the Incas are given new clarity by a spate of modern research on America's largest native empire. 225 black-and-white illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an extremely detailed overview of Andean archaeology; you won't find more information anywhere else. Unfortunately Moseley is not a particularly talented writer. The information is

delivered steadily and relentlessly with no effort to hold the reader's attention with any alteration of tone or pace. The first several chapters are readable enough. The brief overview of the Incas, though dry, gives information and insights I had not encountered before, and the account of the first population of the Andes was likewise new and fresh to me. But when he delves into the earliest architecture, and the relentless description of "U-shaped ceremonial centers", the monotone settles in. I thought I was a big enough fan of Peruvian culture that I'd enjoy learning anything, But the minute inventory of exactly how many U-shaped ceremonial centers appear where, and when, and how far apart, and how they changed from period to period, was just too detailed to sustain my attention. Maybe there's no way to convey this amount of information and make it lively, but you get the feeling Moseley didn't even try. Here's a typical sentence: " Thus, a great plenitude of early civic-ceremonial works commemorated the rise of innumerable autonomous collectives sustained by independent farming systems." (p. 135). I guess the problem is that the prose is as colorless as the photos. One reviewer calls the book "richly illustrated" but I dispute that. Different subjects require different amounts and quality of visual material. A book of archaeology should have more photos than, say, a biography, and most need to be IN COLOR. The photos were not always placed where needed, and were not supplied at all for some topics.

I was attracted to this book because of the generally positive .com reviews and because it explored the many early civilizations of the western littoral and sierras of South America from the earliest times. Up to that time I had thought there was not much going on in that region before the onset of the Inca Empire. How wrong I was - even after I had re-read two books I already had on the Incas - "The Civilisation of the Incas" by Jean-Claude Valla published in 1978, and "The Conquest of Peru" by William H Prescott which was first published in 1847. I still stand by my reviews of these books, but my knowledge of the earlier civilizations in Peru has certainly been greatly enhanced by this book, which is the revised edition published in 2001. The author explains that the Incas, contrary to the understanding to most scholars for about three centuries after the conquest of Peru by Francisco Pizarro and his small band of some 200 men, accepted the assertion of those descendants of the survivors of the conquest, that civilization in Peru began and ended with the Incas and their empire. Archaeological research from the last half of the 19th century and beyond has clearly indicated that there were many areas where sophisticated communities and proto-states developed and flourished for considerable periods of time. That many of these eventually faded away to be replaced by others is quite clear from the archeological record. That this area also suffered periodic climatological and geological disturbances which were so severe

that communities in those areas had to adapt or perish.

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