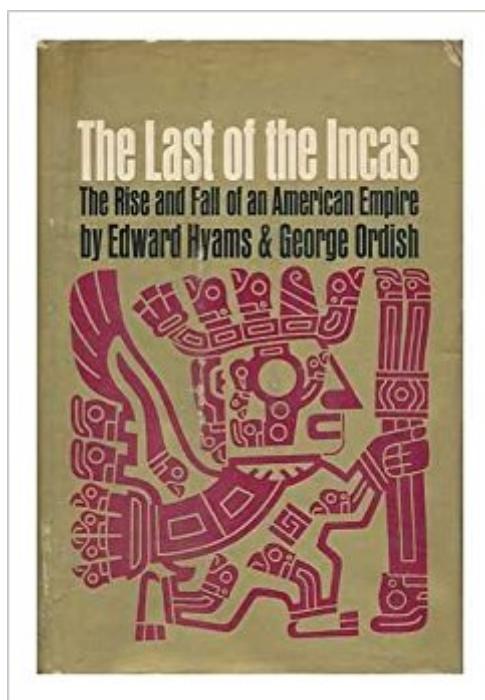


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The Last Of The Incas: The Rise And Fall Of An American Empire



Synopsis

1996 Barnes Noble hardcover, 6th printing. Edward Hyams (Niki: The Story of a Dog), George Ordish (The Living Garden: The 400-year History of an English Garden). Dramatically written, authoritative account of the Inca empire: its rulers and their queens, its unique social structure, its cultural achievements, the special circumstances of its downfall. -Google Books

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Customer Reviews

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I was expecting the first addition not the second :(

I have studied the Inka for years and have never found a book that covered all the this book covers. I read it while I was touring Inka site last week and I found it really tore my heart out to realize that these guys had an amazing and effective why of life. The Spanish smashed the society and replaced it with a seriously flawed one. The authors humorously compare the Inka Society to the the Russian Communist one to show the Inka were like a modern success story. It would have been better to use the Inka to point out where communism failed where The Inks did create a society where the needs of all were met and expectation of the society members matched their abilities. Had the Inka gained the Spanish technology the story of European conquest might have had a very

different outcome Quechua might even have been our language.

I have read a number of accounts of the Conquest of Peru from Prescott to the modern day. All admit they are working with very limited resources due to the lack of any written history of the Incas before the arrival of the Spanish. (and many contemporaneous accounts were simply copied from each other or a common source). Of all the histories, this presents the most plausible account of what may have actually happened. It breaks down some of the scholarly language that is often used to disguise a lack of real facts (I particularly liked the argument that "Awaiting in an ante-chamber" could just as well be rephrased as "hanging around in the backyard") and gives a plausible account of why Atahualpa was murdered. It is refreshing for the authors to state that in many cases they simply do not know something - as there really is no evidence and so any opinion is merely speculative and theirs is as valid as anyone else's. They are no apologists for Stalin etc. but use such regimes for comparison. Their view that the Inca Nation was a benevolent socialist kingdom (with caveats though) is one that remains unchanged and is still argued for by the experts today. For a book written in 1963, and one written with the aims of both instructing and entertaining, it has a clarity missing in most recent expert histories of Peru and this ensures it is still remarkably valid today.

So strongly do I feel about the value of this book and the egregious errors in the second review that I joined in order to do my level best to lavish praise on this book and its authors, to whom I AM NOT RELATED. Given that The Last of the Incas was written in 1963 I feel certain that both authors have gone to the Big Publishing House in the Sky. I would otherwise write to them and praise their highly engaging historical writing, leavened with a wryly erudite (oh, and dare one say it?) left-of-center humor. Their "tongue-in-cheek-and-other-places" description of archaic Peruvian erotic pottery is as understated (and yet pointed) as the finest British dry wit. At every level of the book's construction their care is evident. Contextual and culture-specific assessments are so stated -- their pedagogical bias is evident (and, I admit, completely congruent with mine) and thus readily available for the reader's close analysis and assessment. Hyams' and Ordish's opening pages suggest that a valid goal for the teaching of history is to be entertaining. This they do while uncovering deep movements in Culture's growth and transformations. Written nearly 50 years ago The Last of the Incas remains hugely relevant in terms of current methods of historical discourse. The pre-Inca/Inca horizon represents a culture that is completely different from our Western models derived from the Mediterranean world, or the Mid-East, much less the Far East. In trying to give us some way of understanding how these societies were structured it is true that the "socialist/communist" model is

introduced, with the many caveats necessary when any translation is made -- there is NO mapping of one culture on to another that does not require a slippery understanding of the terms used. To dismiss the book as "praising Stalin" is, well, stupid! If you have ANY interest in Pacific Coast South American cultures (Moche Chimú, Tiahuanaco, Inca or the myriad smaller cultural efflorescences) I urge you to read this book. And buy cheap copies to give to friend who will LOVE you for so doing.

I read this while travelling in Ecuador and couldn't part with it. It was quick enough to not get bogged down in details. It gave a brief history of the Inca empire, and then analyzed its downfall in greater detail. The insights I gained from reading this book helped me to gain a greater understanding of Latin American culture. The societal structure of Latin America before the conquistadors came and its subsequent disintegration help an American to understand why Latin America sometimes seems so chaotic and backwards. It was the first book on the Incas whose message really stuck with me.

This book is hilarious. Purchased for \$1 at a book sale I got at least 3 hours of laughs out of it. Aside from the flimsy arguments and self-defeating prose the authors basically concede that they have nothing to work with. All this is amusing. But the fact they are apologists for Stalin is the only reason to pick up this counter-factual drivel. Attacks on private property and wage slaves abound. The Incas and their Socialist paradise were apparently a beacon in the New World. Which may be true. They didn't eat people with the gusto of the Aztecs. The claims about the Inca people (just like the Soviets) freely giving their time and lives to work on public projects for the greater good are shocking and unbelievable. He is clearly defending the White Sea Canal, Chinese Great Leap Forward and other grave crimes against humanity. Suffice it to say the vigorous laughter which these outrageous clown authors evoked in 2008 would not have been merited when it was written in 1963.

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