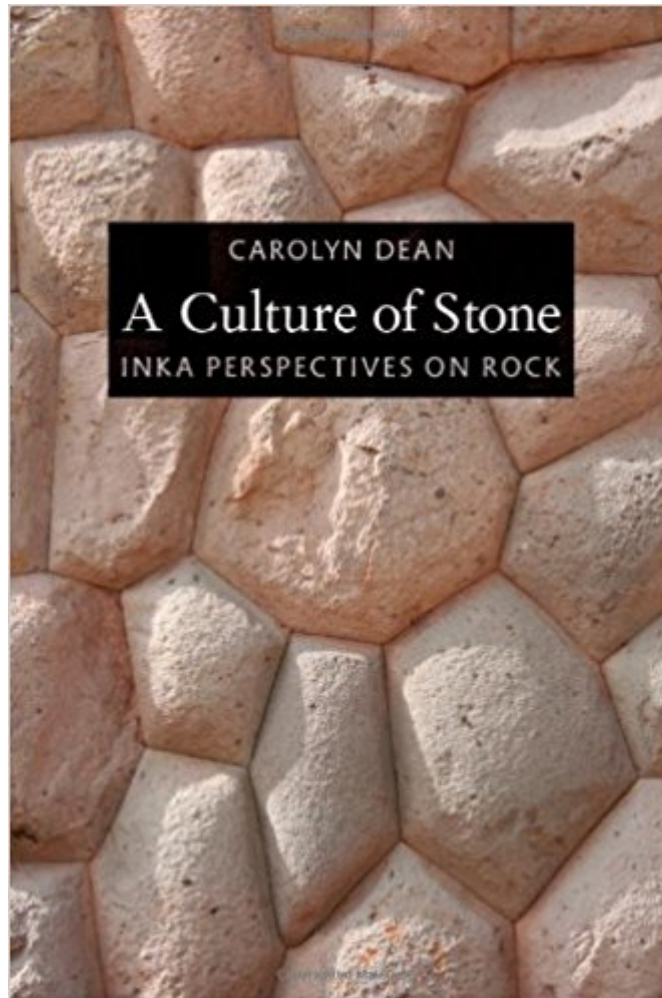




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# A Culture Of Stone: Inka Perspectives On Rock



## Synopsis

A major contribution to both art history and Latin American studies, *A Culture of Stone* offers sophisticated new insights into Inka culture and the interpretation of non-Western art. Carolyn Dean focuses on rock outcrops masterfully integrated into Inka architecture, exquisitely worked masonry, and freestanding sacred rocks, explaining how certain stones took on lives of their own and played a vital role in the unfolding of Inka history. Examining the multiple uses of stone, she argues that the Inka understood building in stone as a way of ordering the chaos of unordered nature, converting untamed spaces into domesticated places, and laying claim to new territories. Dean contends that understanding what the rocks signified requires seeing them as the Inka saw them: as potentially animate, sentient, and sacred. Through careful analysis of Inka stonework, colonial-period accounts of the Inka, and contemporary ethnographic and folkloric studies of indigenous Andean culture, Dean reconstructs the relationships between stonework and other aspects of Inka life, including imperial expansion, worship, and agriculture. She also scrutinizes meanings imposed on Inka stone by the colonial Spanish and, later, by tourism and the tourist industry. *A Culture of Stone* is a compelling multidisciplinary argument for rethinking how we see and comprehend the Inka past.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Art historian Dean has provided perhaps the best interpretation of how the Inkas saw their environment, particularly their lithic one, and how this motivated their actions. . . . Her judicious use of historical documents, combined with thoughtful and critical analysis of contemporary Andean concepts that appear rooted in their pre-Hispanic ancestry, provides a new and refreshing

perspective for understanding the Inkas' culture of stone. - Michael Malpass, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* "A Culture of Stone is beautifully written. . . . As a study of ancient rocks, their material texture, location and relationship to other features in the landscape, as well as their social agency during Inka times, A Culture of Stone is a welcome intervention and will be of interest to students of material worlds, anthropologists, archaeologists, as well as scholars of Peru and Latin America. - Haidy L Geismar, *Material Worlds* blog "As a study of the rocks themselves, their material texture, location and relationship to other features in the landscape, as well as their social agency, A Culture of Stone is a welcome intervention in art history, and will also be of interest to anthropologists, archaeologists, and scholars of Peru and Latin America. - Sandra Rozental, *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* "In her exquisitely researched, articulate, and annotated book, Carolyn Dean explores the Inka love affair with stone and demonstrates the near-universal role played by the material in Inka cultural and spiritual life. . . . Dean has made a strong contribution to the field of Andean studies, one well presented and worth reading. - Vincent R. Lee, *American Historical Review* "[Dean's] book has implications far beyond its locus in Latin America. . . . [I]t represents an intervention into current debates about world art history. Dean suggests a way in which the interpretation of human interactions with nature that in the European tradition are called art and architecture may be imaginatively reconstructed with terms and concepts that are not Eurocentric. - Thomas DeCosta Kaufmann, *CAA Reviews* "By addressing both well-known and understudied objects, Carolyn Dean offers sophisticated new insights into Inka practices. Moreover, while advancing scholarship on the colonial Andes, she tackles issues relating to the interpretation of non-Western art and its reception, contributing to debates on material objects and the built environment in a wide range of fields. - Dana Leibsohn, *Smith College* "Gold, silver, and weaving are the riches most often associated with the Inka, but as Carolyn Dean's scholarly study demonstrates, their greatest investment of thought and time was in stone. Moving between descriptions of the magnificent walls of Inka imperial buildings and worked stones in situ, Dean links them as related parts of Inka visual expression, which is hard to comprehend and not easily recognized. But, as Dean stresses, there is an intimate relationship between Andeans and stone that is at the heart of the greatest empire of Ancient America. - Thomas B. F. Cummins, *Harvard University* "The sixteenth-century Spanish priest Crist bal de Albornoz noted that over half of the sacred things in the Inka capital of Cuzco were rocks. In her stimulating new book, Carolyn Dean explores this culture of stone, examining

ways in which rock outcrops and other rock forms were the focus of ritual practice and spiritual belief. Illuminating key aspects of pre-Hispanic understandings of landscape and the built environment, this insightful and thought-provoking study reframes the way we consider the Inka visual world.

• Joanne Pillsbury, Director of Pre-Columbian Studies, Dumbarton Oaks

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This is a fascinating book. I am not qualified to evaluate Dean's scholarship other than to say it's convincing, and perhaps her insights are truly original. According to her, the Inka thought rocks were people but not all rocks, and not all the time. There's a lot of advanced vocabulary

like "lithic embodiments" so get your dictionary out. She does not romanticize the Inka in any way. They were empire-builders who built their famous stone monuments using large amounts of conscripted labor and very limited technology. And even though she presents their beliefs very carefully and eloquently, she never claims to share them.

I read this book before, during and after a recent trip to Peru. It was extremely useful as a tool to help me understand the WHY of Inca stonework. A scholarly volume written from the heart that gives credit where credit is due.

Liked it so much that I bought copies for every Peruvian I could think of. The philosophy of the relationship with stone is excellent and so different from what the local guides are telling the tourists. Enlightening.

Carolyn brings an insight and perspective regarding the stones, their location, and their meaning which would never occur to one without reading her work. Definitely worth it...and more...

Not my favorite book. The author assumes that all people in the western world are bafoons who could never appreciate anything as art except sculptures and paintings and the like. While trying to prove that we should all be open minded, the author is judgement and close minded to the fact that not all westerners are dense creatures who wouldn't know art if it was staring them in the face.

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