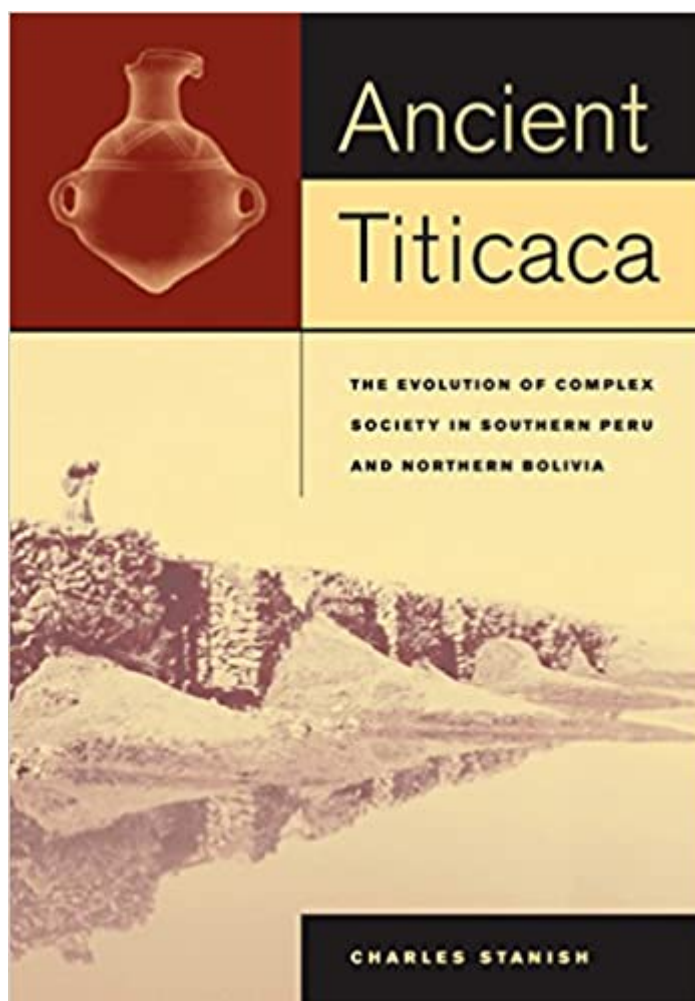


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Ancient Titicaca: The Evolution Of Complex Society In Southern Peru And Northern Bolivia



Synopsis

One of the richest and most complex civilizations in ancient America evolved around Lake Titicaca in southern Peru and northern Bolivia. This book is the first comprehensive synthesis of four thousand years of prehistory for the entire Titicaca region. It is a fascinating story of the transition from hunting and gathering to early agriculture, to the formation of the Tiwanaku and Pucara civilizations, and to the double conquest of the region, first by the powerful neighboring Inca in the fifteenth century and a century later by the Spanish Crown. Based on more than fifteen years of field research in Peru and Bolivia, Charles Stanish's book brings together a wide range of ethnographic, historical, and archaeological data, including material that has not yet been published. This landmark work brings the author's intimate knowledge of the ethnography and archaeology in this region to bear on major theoretical concerns in evolutionary anthropology. Stanish provides a broad comparative framework for evaluating how these complex societies developed. After giving an overview of the region's archaeology and cultural history, he discusses the history of archaeological research in the Titicaca Basin, as well as its geography, ecology, and ethnography. He then synthesizes the data from six archaeological periods in the Titicaca Basin within an evolutionary anthropological framework. Titicaca Basin prehistory has long been viewed through the lens of first Inca intellectuals and the Spanish state. This book demonstrates that the ancestors of the Aymara people of the Titicaca Basin rivaled the Incas in wealth, sophistication, and cultural genius. The provocative data and interpretations of this book will also make us think anew about the rise and fall of other civilizations throughout history.

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Customer Reviews

"No previous writer has attempted such an ambitious synthesis of the archaeology of Southern Peru and Northern Bolivia. Stanish is to be congratulated for his bold and successful endeavor. This work will be required reading in university level courses and a regular presence on the bookshelves of Andean scholars for years to come."-Garth Bawden, author of *The Moche*

"No previous writer has attempted such an ambitious synthesis of the archaeology of Southern Peru and Northern Bolivia. Stanish is to be congratulated for his bold and successful endeavor. In this book he offers his readers an impressively broad range of archaeological, historic and cultural data and presents a coherent and plausible interpretation of the evolution of society in the greater Titicaca Basin. It is exciting that this material will now be available to Andean specialists and students of comparative civilization alike. This work will be required reading in university level courses and a regular presence on the bookshelves of Andean scholars for years to come."-Garth Bawden, author of *The Moche*

"This case study of prehispanic cultural evolution in the Titicaca Basin addresses issues of broad general interest, not only to Andeanists but also to scholars working in many other parts of the world where archaic states and empires developed from simpler cultural forms. Stanish, who has been working along the forefront of research on the Titicaca Basin, brings a very large body of new data to bear upon major theoretical concerns in evolutionary anthropology. This book makes the Titicaca Basin archaeological record much more accessible than it ever has been in the past. It is a major contribution, and will surely be a landmark study for years to come."-Jeffrey R. Parsons, co-author of *2000 Prehispanic Settlement Patterns in the Upper Mantaro and Tarma Drainages, Junin, Peru*

This book analyzes the cultures of successive human settlements in the vicinity of Lake Titicaca from 1500 BC, when people in that area began making ceramics, to about 1600 AD. The six thousand years of even more ancient settlement get zero coverage (see, *Settlement Of The Americas A New Prehistory*). Of course, traces of such earlier times would be hard to discern given the fact that the lakeside was so heavily settled for such a long time. Also escaping much discussion are related folk who lived away from the shore either as nomads on the high plains or as colonials in the lowlands on both sides of the Andes. This disappoints me because the latter, he claims, were the outlets for the refugees after the fabled Tiwanaku Empire collapsed around 1000 AD. One thing is clear, most of the 'dirt' you stand on within several kilometers of the huge lake contains substantial admixtures of cultural detritus thousands of years old. Photos, maps, plans and

illustrative drawings are few and poor. The long recitation of periods and locations of settlements around the lake shore, and on the intriguing islands of the Sun and Moon, bored me. Nonetheless, I found many enjoyable parts. There is a good synthetic evocation of pre Inca imperial life based on Spanish chroniclers' descriptions and sixteenth century Royal censuses supplemented with modern ethnography and archaeology. The bibliography is very good and the footnoting is helpful, plus it has a good index. A list of selected Aymara words from Bertonio's dictionary, written in 1567, proves surprisingly interesting to a person acquainted with regional Spanish. The idea that drinking feasts were central institutions of the political systems that bound elites and peasants together throughout time leads the author to a rule of thumb for detecting the political affiliations of people who lived at particular times and places. Those who ate and drank from their own ethnically characteristic formal ceramic wares were independent local elites who ran their own show (pp.177-79). Those who partied with fine serving wares and drank from magnificent "keros" in the exact imperial style were the administrative functionaries or direct agents of the empire. By contrast, mere imperial sympathizers and fifth columnists ate from clumsy copies of the classy imperial party service. In this connection, it is too bad the author fails to depict a 'full service' feast ware of any of the dominant cultures in the Lake Titicaca area. Alas, no one else I have seen does this either.

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