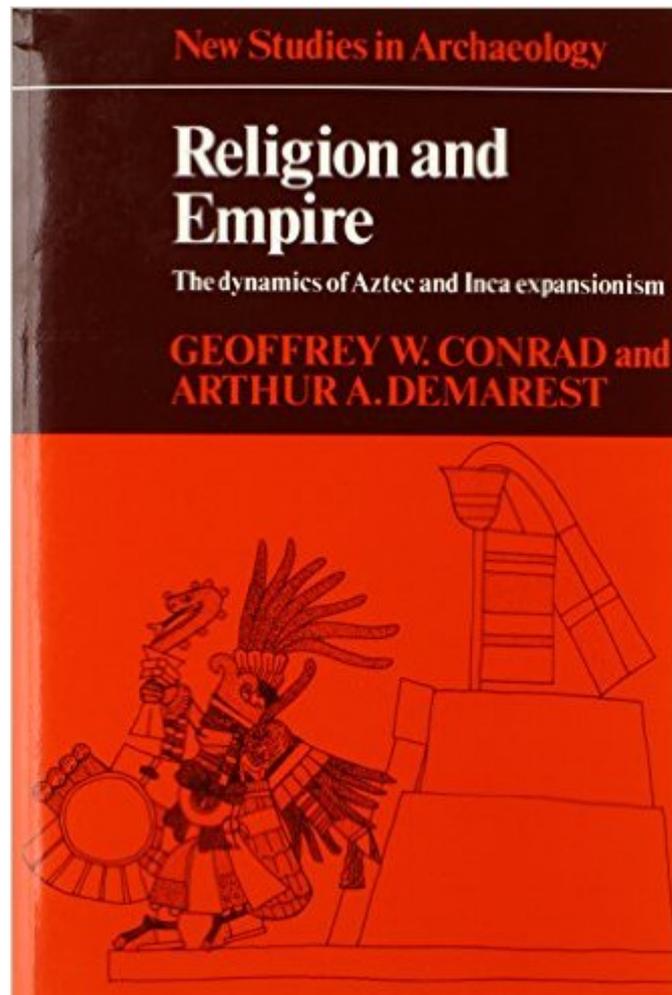


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Religion And Empire: The Dynamics Of Aztec And Inca Expansionism (New Studies In Archaeology)



Synopsis

Religion and Empire is an innovative and provocative study of the two largest states of the Precolumbian Americas, the Aztec and Inca Empires. By examining the causes of the formation and expansion of these two empires, the authors identify similar patterns and processes underlying their rise and decline. They demonstrate that in both examples among the critical elements in the transition from marginal people to imperial power to disintegrating society were changes in traditional religion, including the elaboration of Aztec human sacrifice and Inca worship of the corpses of their kings. The authors show that the complex interaction between such ideological shifts and political and economic factors generated the spectacular historical trajectories of these Pre-Colombian empires.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this book as part of a research project into the rise and fall of the Mexica, or Aztec. This book offered an interesting view of the Aztec, as a warfaring society which was propelled by a religious zeal that got out of hand and eventually caused the destabilization of a great empire. While I happen to disagree with certain arguments in this book they are all well justified with valid arguments. This field is constantly changing and is full of writers who don't have the background or the backing for their arguments, this is not one of them. Conrad and Demerest use fresh, compelling, and well thoughtout arguments to make an interesting point. If researching the Inca and Aztec this is a must read to achieve a good view of these two expansionist empires.

I read this book for a class on the emergence of state society. The book was great for its review of Aztec ideology and its resulting effects on the society. Too many authors ignore the importance of the way people think. However, archaeological evidence does not support their conclusions about the Inca's ancestor worship. But the book was good read, very fast paced and enjoyable. I recommend it.

The book really gets into the nuts and bolts of the empires, showing you how ideas could give birth to and help expand the two cultures. But it also shows how the same ideas could hinder and even start to destroy the empires later in their existence. Yet it is not hard to read and even delightful at some points. They answer a lot of questions I had about the Aztec and Inca, making sure to support everything they say with lots of details. A must of any history library.

The interpretations of the Aztec empire in this book were misleading and deficient when it was first published in 1984; now they are both bad and outdated. According to the authors, the driving force of Aztec imperial expansion was rabid religious fanaticism. Crazy bloodthirsty warriors supposedly ran around conquering peoples with no sense of planning or strategy, and with no economic motivation (sounds sort of like the bloodthirsty Maya of Mel Gibson's movie *Apocalypto*). This interpretation does not work for *Apocalypto*, and it does not work for the Aztec empire either. I'm not qualified to evaluate the Inca sections of the book. But if you are interested in Aztec imperialism, please check some of the post-1984 literature.

It explains how modern/western thought fails when applied to the cultures of the Aztecs and Incas. This book is good for beginning students for the narrative is easy to follow. However, it is outstanding for the more advanced scholar. This book would make a great companion book to broader studies of these two cultures. The authors criticise modern archaeology for its dogmatic unbending views. The authors also take modern political theory and apply it to these ancient cultures. What happens is that it falls apart. Marx, Hegel, et al have met their match against these ancient ones. What a great departure from the faulty theories of socialism & communism.

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