

## References

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- GEORGE F. LAU. *An archaeology of Ancash: stones, ruins and communities in Andean Peru*. 2016. Abingdon: Routledge; 978-1-138-89899-8 £110.



George Lau is a prolific writer on Andean, especially north-central highland, archaeology; this book represents his fourth volume since 2011. An erudite, profoundly informed scholar, Lau combines a surprisingly low-key

writing style with startling insights and interpretations, such that he seduces rather than bludgeons you with new takes on old data, or the application of high theory to South American contexts. As with his 2012 *Ancient alterity in the Andes*, the author introduces a theme, in this case monumental stone sculpture and construction, and works it into the archaeology of a region to tease out diachronic relationships between people and cultures. The book is fundamentally about ancient (and modern) Andean engagement with stone, a topic not covered at

book-length since Richard Schaedel's seminal doctoral thesis in 1952.

The Ancash region of the north-central Andes provides the backdrop to this study in stone. To those unaware of this region, suffice to say that over the last few millennia it and its immediate environs saw the emergence of coastal Andean civilisation (La Galgada, Caral, El Paraíso and the like), as well as the rise of the first pan-Andean religious cult, centred at the site of Chavín in the highlands. Indeed, the book is a sweeping treatise of Andean archaeology as experienced through the prism of Ancash. The focus might be local, but the scope is definitely Andean, and, in its thematic appeal, international. In this sense, I am reminded of Richard Bradley's work on monuments and natural places in the European Neolithic (1998, 2000), in that the author uses a specific geographic and cultural context—Ancash—to present and explain a broader theme, that of human engagement with stone construction and sculpture.

Thus, the volume appeals beyond its immediate South American context, providing an informed case study on the relationship between humans and stone from the perspective of phenomenology, object agency, distributed personhood and sacred landscapes. This overarching engagement is what he terms *lithicity*, explained as the “stone's physical forms and properties and the series of understandings that make it special (or not), the focus for cultural experience and the source for causal sequences in the proximity of social others” (p. 17). In this sense, lithicity captures both the physical and metaphysical relationship between people and stone, a relationship that is both historically and culturally conditioned, and crucially, shifts through time. While this theme has been addressed for the Inka (AD 1400–1532) recently by the likes of Carolyn Dean and Jessica Joyce Christie, this volume encompasses a *longue durée* of human/stone interaction across 5000 years and a multitude of cultures.

Throughout the various examples listed in the book, the author highlights the materiality of stone, its *otherness* and how it can act as an agent cementing a community's relationship with the land. In effect, stone is a constant, mediating cultural flux through alternating cycles of veneration, iconoclasm and rediscovery. Following a tone-setting, theory-laden first chapter, the book leads on with an appreciation of the physical nature of stone, where it is found, how it is extracted and shaped, and who—through time—worked on it. The next chapters deal with particular periods, sites and cultures. During the long Late

Preceramic (c. 4000–2000 BC) and Initial Periods (c. 2000–1000 BC), the first communities and stone monuments were constructed. Later, the religious phenomenon of Chavín (c. 1000–200 BC) was expressed in art, monumentality and sculpture, while during the Huarás (c. 200 BC–AD 200) and the Recuay periods (AD 200–700), deified ancestors were commemorated through *lithification*. A final discussion deals with the Wari (c. AD 700–1000) and Inka (c. AD 1400–1532), and their expression of empire through the stone construction of state infrastructure.

The Late Intermediate Period (c. AD 1000–1400), squeezed between the Wari and Inka Empires, gets short shrift and this is a pity. Nevertheless, the range is impressive, and especially in the Chavín and Recuay chapters, the author delves into what stone meant for these ancient people of Ancash. Under the Chavín, this supposedly non-militaristic culture articulated their religious worldview through the artistic representation of gods in stone and lithic architecture, leading to the creation of a broad religious community that expanded across the Andes. In contrast, the Recuay heralded a more localised, community-based veneration of stone not only as divinities, but as honoured, *lithified* ancestors. Ancestor worship, a key component of late Andean prehistory, comes to the fore during this period and continues in varied forms all the way through; it is identified with standing stones known as *huacas*, communal subterranean tombs and above-ground mausoleums. Rituals associated with ancestor worship emphasised economic and social renewal through the veneration of exalted ancestors who provided the wherewithal and authority to propagate their descendant communities.

Two further chapters (6 and 8) provide an interesting digression, and a reflection of modern Ancashino association with stone, respectively. Lau offers convincing evidence to suggest that the stone *tableros* (stone or wooden slabs or boards with, usually, symmetrically aligned rectangular or circular subdivisions) found in the Andes were not counting devices (*yupana*) or models (*maqueta*) of structures or fields, but rather board games in their own right. Similar to the African *mancala* or *bao* game, these games seem to have been metaphors reflecting the inherent dualism of the Andean social world. Chapter 8 on the modern importance of ancient stonework explains the more recent appropriation and exhibition of ancient monuments and imagery as perpetuating a particular local and regional identity, almost an Ancash

ethnogenesis through stone. This modern fixation with the past comes partly because of outside interest and tourism geared towards the richness of Ancash's stonework and iconography, and, as in the past, we observe, "the uncanny agency of stone, especially ancient stoneworks, in promoting community" (p. 209). Indeed, throughout the book, stone is seen as the central agent, linking cultures and periods while generating and maintaining diverse communities.

Extremely well written, up to date and saturated with information, this book is a delicate balancing act between theory and data. Is it well done? It is. I particularly liked the 'focus sections' on select sites or objects, as well as the abundant colour plates. In conclusion, we have here the definitive book on the archaeology of Ancash. Yet it also should have wider appeal beyond the regional focus through its in-depth assessment of people's enduring engagement with the (meta)physicality of stone.

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- JOSEPHINE QUINN. *In search of the Phoenicians*. 2018. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 978-0-691-17527-0 \$35.



This timely book is a fascinating exploration of the development of 'Phoenician' as an identifier for the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age inhabitants of coastal Levantine cities and their associated