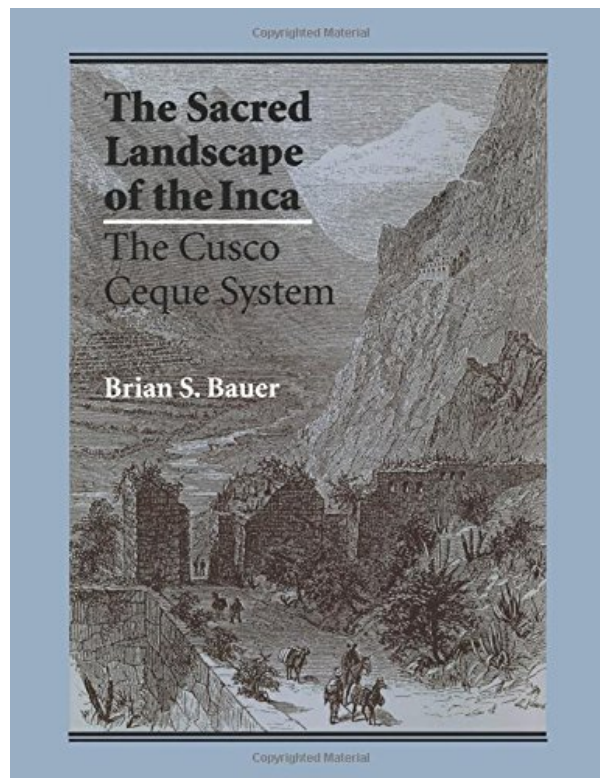
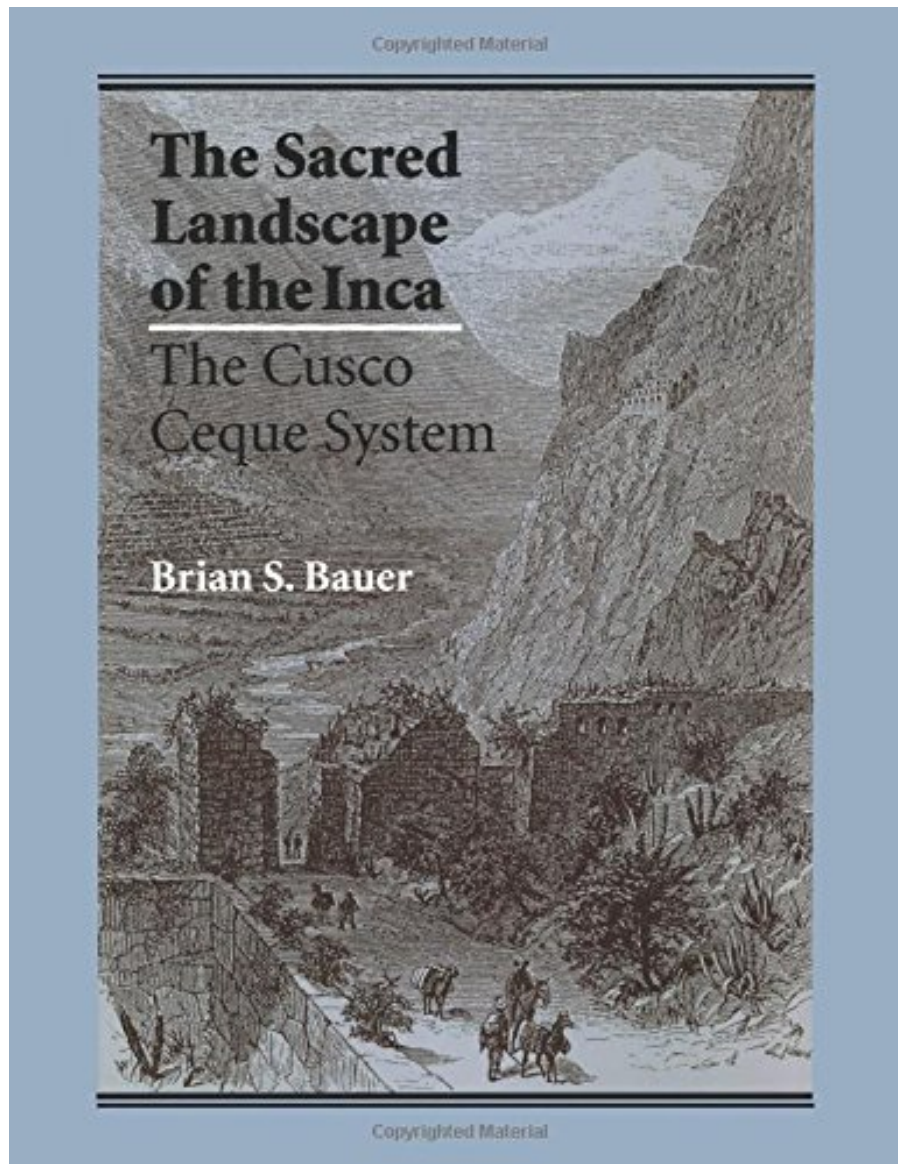


THE SACRED LANDSCAPE OF THE INCA: THE CUSCO CEQUE SYSTEM BY BRIAN S. BAUER



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Review

"A major contribution to Andean studies.... Bauer not only provides a grand synthesis of what is known about the ceque system, but also provides new description, fieldwork, and interpretation. The book will have a wide audience." (Clark L. Erickson, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania)

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The ceque system of Cusco, the ancient capital of the Inca empire, was perhaps the most complex indigenous ritual system in the pre-Columbian Americas. From a center known as the Coricancha (Golden Enclosure) or the Temple of the Sun, a system of 328 huacas (shrines) arranged along 42 ceques (lines) radiated out toward the mountains surrounding the city. This elaborate network, maintained by ayllus (kin groups) that made offerings to the shrines in their area, organized the city both temporally and spiritually.

From 1990 to 1995, Brian Bauer directed a major project to document the ceque system of Cusco. In this book, he synthesizes extensive archaeological survey work with archival research into the Inca social groups of the Cusco region, their land holdings, and the positions of the shrines to offer a comprehensive, empirical description of the ceque system. Moving well beyond previous interpretations, Bauer constructs a convincing model of the system's physical form and its relation to the social, political, and territorial organization of Cusco.

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Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

A large step in the right direction

By Robin gVL

After many years of the study of the Cusco Ceque System being dominated by what I might characterize as ethnohistorically-oblivious astronomy-- the ground-breaking but ultimately limited studies by R. Tom Zuidema in particular-- Brian S. Bauer has shed (most of) the shortcomings of many of his scholarly predecessors and released the first compelling and (mostly) complete study on the geography of the Ceque System, the administrative, political, astronomical, social, and spiritual system that helped the Inkas effectively govern their empire (so much so, in fact, that in an empire of millions, nobody went hungry).

I say that this is a study of the Geography of the Ceque System because some other works-- those of Zuidema and Anthony Aveni, and the unpublished research of Peruvian master archeologist Manuel Chavez Ballon-- are perhaps more in depth when it comes to the astronomical and water-related principles contained within the System. Bauer indeed seems to maintain as his focus the discovery of the locations of the 328 (more or less) huacas-- sanctuaries that act as the nodes or dots along the ceque lines. In so doing, he provides the evidence necessary to deconstruct and discard the long outdated theory (maintained by Zuidema) that the ceques are perfectly straight lines. As such, Bauer reminds scholars and readers alike that under the holistic approach of the Inkas, a system as complex as the one in question Cannot truthfully be viewed as Solely astronomical, an affirmation that the Zuidema model (at least indirectly) endorses.

Shortcomings? Bauer perhaps could have stood a year or two more of field work to fill in the holes in his maps of the system. And, in order to present a work of broader interest, he perhaps would have been wise to present more of the theories of his contemporaries. The near absense of findings by colleagues like Zuidema and Aveni leaves a somewhat limited picture of the System, providing the reverse negative form of these previous works-- in other words, whereas Zuidema focused too much attention on astronomy and the straight-line-theory, Bauer thoroughly ignores them. Also, an appendix by a linguist colleague provides highly questionable and often poorly-researched Quechua names for the huacas examined. Because of these (minor) qualms, the book is at a 3.5 or 4 star level and not higher.

As it stands, though, this book is an invaluable addition to the library of any serious student of the ceques, the Inka empire, its organizational principles, and other related topics as diverse as the Nazca lines and Andean astronomy. For the student of ley lines and geodetic formations, this book can also provide interesting contrast. Ultimately, Bauer can be proud of his addition to the study of the Inkas and Andean civilization in general. He reminds us that it was a pristine civilization that appeared in this region of the world, and that even through Chavin, Nazca, Tiwanaku, and Inka permutations, Andean culture and science was wholly unique.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

A Great Contribution by Bauer

By Ken Wright

This remarkable book by Brian Bauer has 263 pages stuffed with lots of detailed information on each of the shrines of the Inca ceque system of Cusco. The ceques are represented by an elaborate collection of shrines that dot the countryside around Cusco, the capital of the pre-historic Inca Empire.

Bauer is a hard worker, a scholar, and eager to help others learn about the Inca. In the Sacred Landscape publication, all three of these qualities are apparent.

For the armchair traveler, Bauer provides 128 photographs and lots of maps, figures and tables that help

explain the Inca ceque system. His descriptions are easy to read and understand.

For the scientist, Bauer draws upon the research of famous archaeologists and anthropologists like Manuel Chavez Ballon, John Rowe, Susan Niles and Tom Zuidema, plus the writings of early chroniclers.

Bauer's field research started in 1990. Since then he visited and recorded many Cusco area shrines, both natural features and Inca structures. However, I wish that Bauer had done more research on my favorite huaca, known as the Cruzmoco, overlooking Tipon, even though it may not have been part of the ceque system.

The review by RobingVL was well done, but too critical of issues not covered. Bauer's topic was the landscape, not the ethnology; after all, he had less than 300 pages to cover all his work in!

Overall, Bauer gets high marks on this book. I give him five stars for his fine contribution to Andean scholarship.

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