



# Reading Inca History

*Catherine Julien*

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At the heart of this book is the controversy over whether Inca history can and should be read as history. Did the Incas narrate a true reflection of their past, and did the Spaniards capture these narratives in a way that can be meaningfully reconstructed? In *Reading Inca History*, Catherine Julien finds that the Incas did indeed create detectable life histories.

The two historical genres that contributed most to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish narratives about the Incas were an official account of Inca dynastic genealogy and a series of life histories of Inca rulers. Rather than take for granted that there was an Inca historical consciousness, Julien begins by establishing an Inca purpose for keeping this dynastic genealogy. She then compares Spanish narratives of the Inca past to identify the structure of underlying Inca genres and establish the dependency on oral sources. Once the genealogical genre can be identified, the life histories can also be detected.

By carefully studying the composition of Spanish narratives and their underlying sources, Julien provides an informed and convincing reading of these complex texts. By disentangling the sources of their meaning, she reaches across time, language, and cultural barriers to achieve a rewarding understanding of the dynamics of Inca and colonial political history.

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