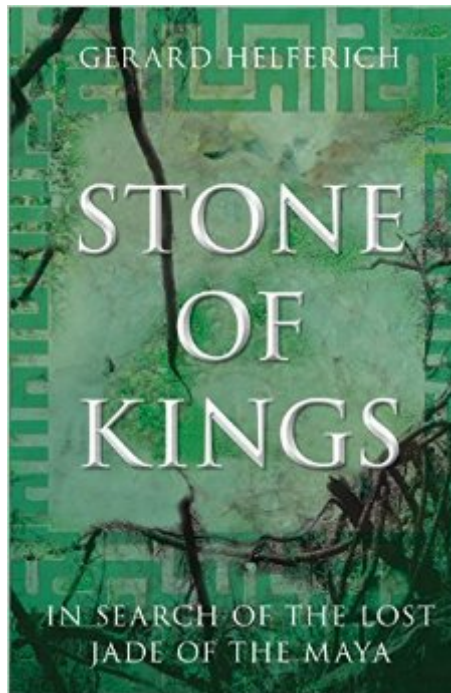


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Stone Of Kings: In Search Of The Lost Jade Of The Maya



Synopsis

A book perfectly timed for the re-setting of the Maya calendar in 2012.... Part history, popular science, armchair travel, and real-life treasure hunt, this is the story of pre-Columbian jade—the precious stone revered by ancient Aztecs, Incans, and Maya—and the scientists, collectors, explorers and entrepreneurs who have been searching for the mythical jade mines for century.

Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Lyons Press; Complete Numbers Starting with 1, 1st Ed edition (December 6, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0762763515

ISBN-13: 978-0762763511

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (14 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #874,501 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #147 in Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Mayan #588 in Books > History > Americas > Central America #1968 in Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Archaeology

Customer Reviews

I never really thought much about jade, now I can think of little else. I'm anxious to revisit some museums with a new appreciation for Olmec and Mayan jade artifacts. In addition to an overview of the stone's importance in pre-hispanic cultures and the rare geological conditions required for true jade's formation, Stone of Kings follows various archeologists, adventurers and entrepreneurs as they search for jade in the Americas. From the surprising discovery of thousands of jade artifacts in Mexico and Central America to very recent discoveries, the mystery of its source is a fascinating story. Highly recommended for armchair travellers, rock-hounds, history buffs, and anyone who enjoys a good story.

Gerard Helferich's book Stone of Kings is a wonderful mixture of archeology, geology, travelogue and treasure hunting. It begins with an overview of the Mayan and Olmec cultures of Mexico and Central America and the importance of jade in their societies. It moves on to explain some of the important finds made by archeologists in the late 1800's and early 1900's which began to reveal the incredible craftsmanship exhibited by the Mayan and Olmec artists particularly in the many jade

objects they produced. An artistry which is even more amazing when one considers that jade is one of nature's hardest minerals and that these societies had no modern metal tools. While jade was apparently a very important component of Mayan and Olmec religious ceremonies, the source of the jade was unknown until fairly recently. This book vividly describes how the persistence of two people, Jay Ridinger and Mary Lou Johnson, led to the rediscovery of at least some of these ancient sources of jade and how their entrepreneurial spirit resulted in the reestablishment of jade carving as a skill in a country the Maya's had called home. All of this takes place while Ridinger and Johnson made their homes in a historic colonial city in the highlands of Guatemala during a period when they had to endure earthquakes, floods and political upheaval. So, on many levels I found this as very wonderful book to read and I would recommend it highly to anyone interested in the fascinating subjects it deals with. Mathew Smith

I have visited Mesoamerica many times and have spent quality time in many Olmec and Mayan sites referred to in this great book. As fascinating as I have found my past travels, I can't wait to revisit them with a new found appreciation for jade and jadeite. This book sheds an exciting new light on the subject. The author has done his homework and framed his subject well. I'm pleasantly surprised at the way he is able to take what many may regard as a 'dry' subject and make it exciting. The way it's written should appeal to anyone who has even a modest interest in Mesoamerica. For those of us who have a deeper interest in Mesoamerican archaeology, it's a 'must read' in the style of an Indiana Jones thriller. What's even more fascinating is that the search continues for further information about this mysterious and precious stone...and the possible connection to the ancient Chinese culture. We may never know all the answers, but the search can take on a life of its own as suggested in the pages of this fine work. Good stuff!

There a good amount of particular history in this book. The first third of the book gives some good history, the second third gives more of the story of the archaeologist and their journey with little tidbits of history, and the remaining part of the book refers more on jade and the people finding it. I would say that the first half of the book was somewhat exciting to read, but towards the second half till the end, I couldn't wait to finish the book.

Indiana Jones.....Geologist? This book took me a while to get into, but once I was there, I was hooked! This story is about so much more than the stones themselves, it is the people, well-drawn and compelling, that really make this a winner! A Book club book I'd recommend to anyone.

I wish we had this book available when we took a rapid tour of the precolumbian areas of Mexico and Guatemala in 1998. I think the author did an excellent job of summarizing the history of the area as well as describing the recent "rediscovery" of the areas. Also, he delves into the geology of "jade" and the techniques of measuring various parameters, which I found interesting. I had no idea what the green material, being shown in a local shop was at the time. We purchased an interesting mask and (assuming my mask really is jade) this book adds another dimension to my understanding of it. John Rich

Well written, interesting information for anyone interested in Middle American history - especially the Mayan and Olmec times. Also for anyone interested in jade. Really explains what jade is. Never boring.

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