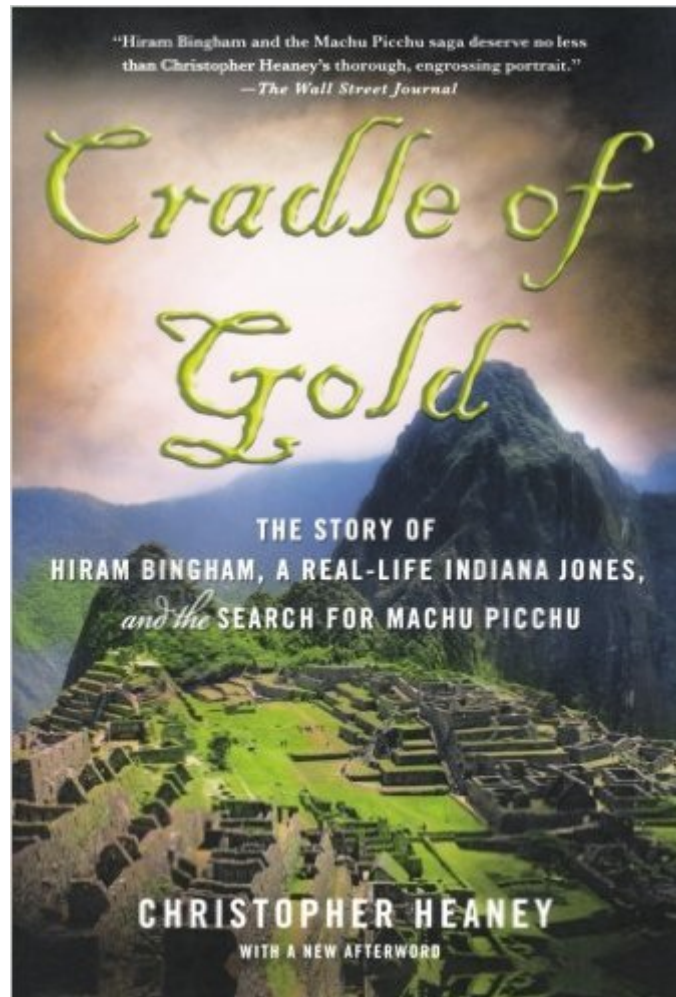


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Cradle Of Gold: The Story Of Hiram Bingham, A Real-Life Indiana Jones, And The Search For Machu Picchu



Synopsis

In 1911, a young Peruvian boy led an American explorer and Yale historian named Hiram Bingham into the ancient Incan citadel of Machu Picchu. Hidden amidst the breathtaking heights of the Andes, this settlement of temples, tombs and palaces was the Incas' greatest achievement. Tall, handsome, and sure of his destiny, Bingham believed that Machu Picchu was the Incas' final refuge, where they fled the Spanish Conquistadors. Bingham made Machu Picchu famous, and his dispatches from the jungle cast him as the swashbuckling hero romanticized today as a true Indiana Jones-like character. But his excavation of the site raised old specters of conquest and plunder, and met with an indigenous nationalism that changed the course of Peruvian history. Though Bingham successfully realized his dream of bringing Machu Picchu's treasure of skulls, bones and artifacts back to the United States, conflict between Yale and Peru persists through the present day over a simple question: Who owns Inca history? In this grand, sweeping narrative, Christopher Heaney takes the reader into the heart of Peru's past to relive the dramatic story of the final years of the Incan empire, the exhilarating recovery of their final cities and the thought-provoking fight over their future. Drawing on original research in untapped archives, Heaney vividly portrays both a stunning landscape and the complex history of a fascinating region that continues to inspire awe and controversy today.

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Customer Reviews

Our culture has a habit of idealizing explorers - emphasizing their bravery, energy, intelligence, and determination. Christopher Heaney's story of Hiram Bingham's explorations in Peru, and his

"discovery" of Machu Picchu and some other Peruvian locations which were critical in the history of the Incas, combines an appreciation for these traits but tempers this portrait of Bingham with the less savory aspects of first world explorers searching for artifacts in the third world. The book begins with the story of Bingham's childhood, and how the parents who raised him were adventurers themselves. However, they were missionaries and Bingham gradually moved away from religion as he became captivated by history and anthropology. His marriage to a woman from a wealthy family provided him with financial security for his family, freeing him to plan explorations, and his Yale experience gave him connections with wealthy families that would support his expeditions. The "treasures" Bingham sought in Peru were not the type you see in the movies - gold, silver, ornate chalices. He was seeking relics from the lives of the Incas. He went to Peru as a privileged American, who hired help and allowed those hires to essentially force locals into working for the expedition. On one trip the expedition's carelessness for its lower level workers apparently led to the death of one - who was just a boy. Many of the locals were suspicious of Bingham and given their history of subjugation and removal of precious metals by the Spaniards their fears were rational. Bingham's efforts yielded a collection of valuable relics and bones for Yale, and resulted in the people of Peru developing an appreciation for the history of their indigenous people.

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