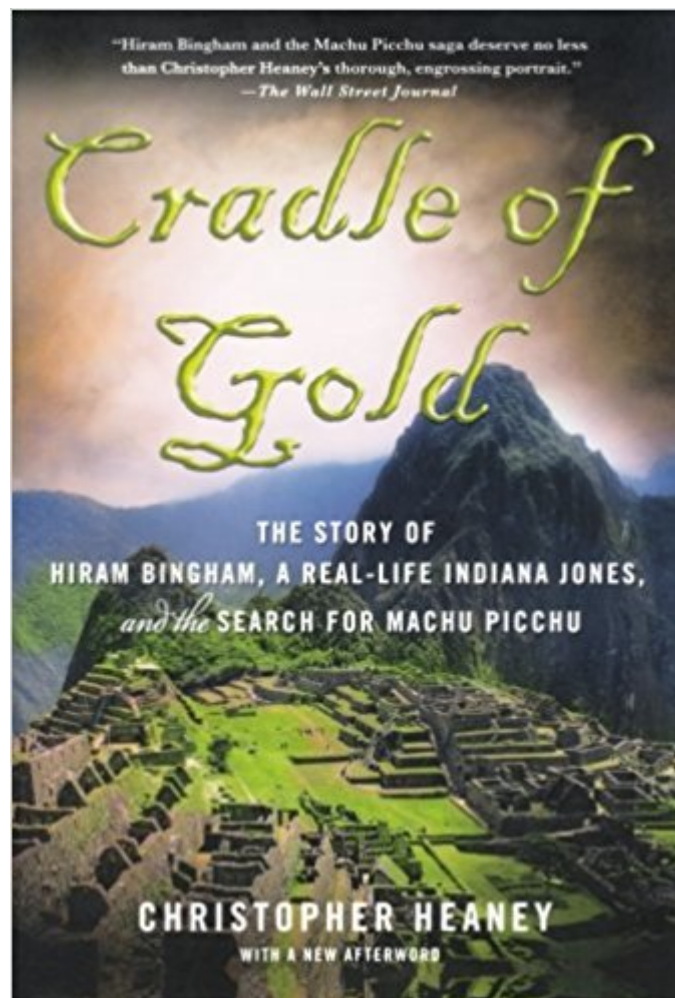




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Cradle Of Gold: The Story Of Hiram Bingham, A Real-Life Indiana Jones, And The Search For Machu Picchu



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

“Hiram Bingham and the Machu Picchu saga deserve no less than *Cradle of Gold*, Christopher Heaney's thorough, engrossing portrait of a mercurial figure at a crucial juncture of his

life. *The Wall Street Journal* "Heaney tells Bingham's fascinating story well. But this excellent book is more than just a rollicking adventure tale — it is also a nuanced study of conflicting claims on history. *Financial Times* "A well-researched and very readable biography of Bingham [Heaney] probes the depths of Bingham's work and character, examining setbacks, scandals, and achievements and skillfully unraveling Bingham's role in the controversy that still exists today between the government of Peru and Yale University over the ownership of the Machu Picchu burials and artifacts. *Library Journal* "Offers a wealth of information. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* "A lively, suspenseful, and well-written yarn...Heaney leads us through jungle trails, up into the Andes, across rushing rivers, along the original Inca Trail, to Espiritu Pampa, 'The Plain of Ghosts' and location of Vilcabamba, the Incan city built in flight from the Spanish -- all juxtaposed with the cruel and ruthless history of the Spaniards in Peru|and the destruction of an empire that was larger than any other on earth, stretching from Chile to Colombia, the Pacific to the . *Providence Journal* "A fascinating work of narrative history that combines careful research with a subtle portrait of a man of great contradictions. Hiram Bingham was an explorer, adventurer, extraordinary scholar, U.S. Senator, and, in the eyes of many, high-handed thief. Heaney's highly readable book at last gives him his due. *Adam Hochschild*, author of *King Leopold's Ghost* "Full of intriguing detail and carefully researched, this is a fitting testimony to one of the greatest of American explorers. *Hugh Thomson*, author of *The White Rock*. "Cradle of Gold brilliantly tells the story of how Hiram Bingham revealed Machu Picchu to the world. Chris Heaney combines dogged research with a gift for storytelling and a historian's rich and nuanced understanding of his subject's times. Bingham emerges as a complex, even tragic figure who, for all his faults, generated real excitement about Peru's past as no one had before. Heaney beautifully and skillfully captures the cultural clash between Bingham and his Peruvian hosts, without for a moment losing the momentum of this gripping story. The result is an immensely compelling tale of exploration and exploitation that has waited nearly a century for the right chronicler. In Chris Heaney, Bingham's story has finally found it. *Roger Atwood*, author of *Stealing History: Tomb Raiders, Smugglers, and the Looting of the Ancient World* "An unforgettable journey into the heart of Peru's past that takes the reader on a hunt for the lost cities of the Incas, the famous Machu Picchu among them. It's also a sensitively written portrait of Hiram Bingham, one of the last great explorers of our time--a man set on fulfilling his destiny--and a judicious historical account of the disenfranchisement of the Peruvian people, who had their heritage stolen by those claiming to protect it.

— Peter Nichols, author of *Final Voyage* and *A Voyage for Madmen*—“*Cradle of Gold* illuminates Bingham’s stunning and controversial discovery-and singular life-with gripping pacing and vivid detail. The book’s young author, Christopher Heaney, is a notable discovery in his own right.”

— Jim Rasenberger, Author of *America, 1908*—“Hiram Bingham’s excavation of Machu Picchu in the early twentieth century is one of the most intriguing stories in a crowded era of exploration.”

— Candice Millard, author of *The River of Doubt*—“*Cradle of Gold* is a wonderfully moving account of those who invented and reinvented three cities nestled deep in the eastern slopes of the Peruvian Andes: Vitcos, Vilcabamba, and Machu Picchu. It is also a subtle, penetrating study of the imperial hubris of early twenty-century US archeology as it traces the origins of Yale’s misbegotten collections of Peruvian antiquities.’ It is a powerfully argued ethical call for the skulls and bones’ of hundreds of both humble and powerful Andeans to be returned to Peru, to their original, ancient, resting grounds, not to museums of natural history where they do not belong.”

— Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Alice Drysdale Sheffield Professor of History, University of Texas at Austin, author of *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700*

Christopher Heaney worked as a journalist in Peru on a Fulbright fellowship. He has written articles on Hiram Bingham for the *New Republic* and *The New York Times*. A graduate of Yale University, he is currently a doctoral candidate in Latin American History at the University of Texas, Austin.

Here’s a good story, told in a beautiful narrative style by a well-qualified author, but here’s the thing: This book isn’t so much a biography of Bingham or a study of the fall of the Inca empire as it is the story of the intermingling of institutions and their claims upon sites and artifacts in Cusco, Peru. It is a careful analysis of cultural ownership, and if such a concept is even possible. Yale, and its various sponsored expeditions, are central to the story. In fact, I’d say the author gives us too much here. Throughout the book the reader may forget that we’re supposed to be learning about the rediscovery of Machu Picchu because we’re reading about the history of Yale University. Perhaps that’s what the author intended. That minor complaint aside, the reader is treated to a beautifully told story in the history of American anthropology. It really DOES read like a real-life Indiana Jones story, and Bingham was a huge figure, much like his fictional counterpart. Still, this is ultimately a book about institutions and politics, and those looking for a detailed biography or a detailed history of the end of the Inca empire will be disappointed.

On the morning of July 24, 1911, a tall lecturer-cum-explorer from Yale University set off in a cold drizzle to investigate rumors of ancient Inca ruins in Peru. The explorer chopped his way through thick jungle, crawled across a "bridge" of slender logs bound together with vines, and crept through underbrush hiding venomous fer-de-lance pit vipers. Two hours into the hike, the explorer and his two escorts came across a grass-covered hut. A pair of Indian farmers walked them a short way before handing them over to a small Indian boy. With the boy leading the way, Hiram Bingham stumbled upon one of the greatest archaeological finds of the 20th century; and what was named in 2007 as one of the new seven wonders of the world: Machu Picchu. Christopher Heaney's "Cradle of Gold" recounts the discovery of Machu Picchu, but also dives deeply into the expeditions leading up to this seminal archaeological discovery, as well as later expeditions and the political intrigues that still exist today. To be clear, Bingham didn't truly 'discover' Machu Picchu. There were two Indian families living on the mountain who were even using the broad Machu Picchu plaza as a garden. It's common in modern times to reference Bingham as the "scientific" discoverer of the mountain top Inca citadel. According to Heaney, it was common during his day as well. Within the last two years, research has emerged that indicates that not only did locals know of the ruins perched above the Urubamba River, but foreign interests were both aware of Machu Picchu, and had sought out (and possibly found), treasure among the ruins. Heaney points out that the debate of who 'discovered' Machu Picchu began the moment Bingham reached the ruins and saw a name clearly scratched in charcoal on an ancient Inca wall. Heaney spent years researching the story in Peru, the UK and across the United States to compile fresh and historic perspectives on Bingham the man, and Bingham the explorer. Heaney covers Bingham's childhood where he grew up in Hawai'i with a deeply religious father and grandfather, both of whom were, and are, renown for their work in spreading and reinforcing Christianity across the Pacific. According to Heaney, Bingham found himself caught between the very conservative world of his religious upbringing, and a strong desire to explore. Additionally, he had to live up to a well-known name and reputation that was generations-old. He ended up marrying an heiress to the Tiffany fortune which provided the early funding of his first trips to South America. He had a knack for history, writing, and leadership. The combination of the three landed him in Peru in 1911. A second ruin-hunting expedition, with primary funding from Yale University, where Hiram graduated and lectured, and the National Geographic Society, returned him to Peru to flesh out his previous discoveries and the historical theories he proposed. Bingham explored, excavated and publicized on his own behalf. Ultimately the world embraced his Lost City which he thought was the first and last cities of the Incas. It is, in fact, the strongest of Bingham's legacies. But there's more to the story than discovery. There's a political side

that adds a rather distasteful bit of reality to the dream-like elements of the Inca city in the clouds. Within the last three years, Peru has been pushing Yale, in the press and in the courts, to return the artifacts that Bingham purportedly took with him from Peru during his series of expeditions. This dark cloud hangs over Machu Picchu which is set to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Bingham's revelation to the world. This political battle is not new. It emerged essentially as Bingham was making his round of celebrity lectures in the U.S. lauding his discoveries. And the battle didn't simply occur around Bingham, he was often right in the middle of the fray. Heaney also makes it clear that Bingham was not a mere innocent bystander, but he helped create a problem that has lasted almost a century. Heaney's story is very detailed and extremely well researched as evidenced by 20+ pages of references and footnotes. He got his hands on several archives rich in journals and personal correspondence related to Machu Picchu and Hiram Bingham. Heaney provides a thrilling account of Bingham's journeys, through the multifaceted lenses of those related to his Peruvian expeditions, as well as his own well-known accounts. The story of Bingham's discoveries evoke the youthful passions to take on incredible challenges in far-off lands. The realities of Bingham's jungle and mountain adventures are mere fantasies of young boys across suburban America...fantasies that are reinforced through pop culture icons like Indiana Jones. Heaney suggests (even in his title) that Indiana Jones was modeled on Hiram Bingham. He, in fact, references an old Charlton Heston film, "Secret of the Incas", upon which the costumers of Raiders of the Lost Ark based Indy's outfit. Heston's character in "Secret of the Incas" is, of course, a dead ringer for Bingham. Like Indy, Bingham's story has good guys and bad guys. Unlike the movies the good guys don't necessarily wear the white hats and the bad guys don't necessarily wear the black ones.

Up to date accounting of the (re)-discovery of Machu Picchu by Hiram Bingham in 1911 now with the final return of artifacts that he collected and deposited at Yale University 100 year later. For all his imperfections, Bingham gave the world one of its wonders which continues to draw visitors internationally. Heaney gives an even handed account of the history up to the present. It is a 'must read' before a visit to Peru.

This is a must-read for anyone who's been to Machu Picchu or has ever dreamed of visiting the city in the sky-- which should include everyone. Heaney's muscular and captivating prose delivers the fruits of exhaustive research in the vessel of a page-turning adventure story. Not only do we get a complete, nuanced, and balanced reporting on Bingham's expeditions to Peru, but also historical context in the form of "Interludes." The young author's natural storytelling gifts shine especially

bright in these sections, causing you to root in vain for the Incas as the Spanish conquest plays out. All in all a great book appropriate both for the casual reader and for more serious students of Latin American history.

My wife and I just got back from visiting Peru, and before our trip we both decided that we would get more out of it if we did some reading about Machu Picchu. We each read a few books, and while they were all helpful in one way or another, "Cradle of Gold" was by far the most beneficial to our trip. "Cradle of Gold" presents the history of Machu Picchu in a straightforward, yet highly readable manner. Both the history of Machu Picchu as a civilization and the story of its "discovery" by Hiram Bingham are fascinating, and Heaney does a wonderful job of telling these stories. He also very fairly presents the controversy surrounding the ownership of the artifacts taken by Bingham, making what could be a dry legal case into an interesting sociopolitical debate. We found that we got much more out of our trip to Peru, and particularly to the Sacred Valley and Machu Picchu, than we would have had we not read "Cradle of Gold." We were able to spend our time with our guide of Machu Picchu skipping over the basic stuff and asking about what interested us most. "Cradle of Gold" provided us with context and a much deeper understanding of what we were seeing, and allowed us to have a much more enjoyable and educational trip than we would have without the book. "Cradle of Gold" is a quick and enjoyable read, and one that I highly recommend for anyone traveling to Peru.

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