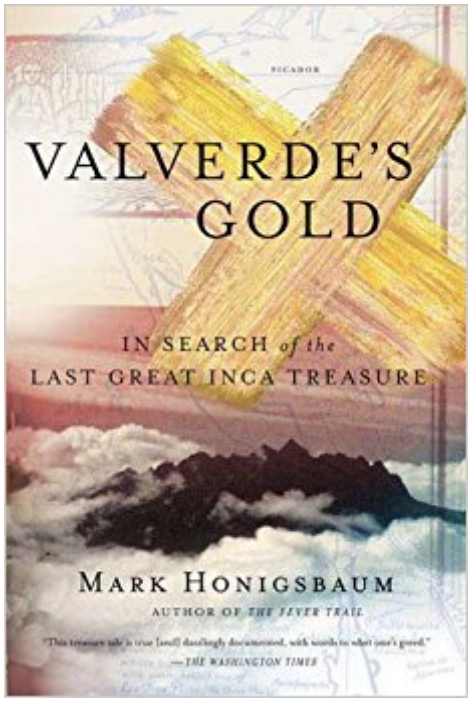
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Valverde's Gold: In Search Of The Last Great Inca Treasure



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Synopsis

When Mark Honigsbaum discovers an ancient Spanish treasure guide buried in his research notebooks, he cannot help but be drawn into the legend of Valverde, a conquistador with a treasure trail that has proven fatal for the past 400 years. Undeterred by the cursed history of the gold, Honigsbaum embarks on an epic journey into the last uncharted range in the Andes--the Llanganati Mountains of eastern Ecuador. This is the story of how the lure of gold intoxicates even the most level-headed of historians, and of how men--and women--are seized with the desire to claim treasure from one of the most inhospitable landscapes in the world. Honigsbaum battles through mountains, jungles, and conflicting stories, and, as he draws closer to the hidden cache, illuminates the allure of lost gold and the hold it has on our imagination.

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Customer Reviews

Journalist and historian Honigsbaum was on a research trip in 2000 to BaÃƒÂ os, Ecuador, when he heard an intriguing tale: in a cave somewhere in the mountains northeast of BaÃƒÂ os, a hoard of gold originally intended as part of the ransom for Inca emperor Atahualpa was said to have been hidden in 1533, and a document known as Valverde's Guide indicated how to find it. Fascinated, Honigsbaum pored through archives; the more he read, the more complex the story became. His recounting of his journey of discovery, about the guides and maps (there turn out to be many), is deliciously detailed and dense, as satisfying as any mystery, since he's genuinely stymied by the riddles he finds. His cast includes a botanist who harvests microscopic orchids resembling bumblebees, an aging Ecuadoran playboy who drinks and lies, and wary descendants of men who

held the original treasure maps in their hands. Despite warnings that the treasure's a chimera and that the mountains are perilously labyrinthine, Honigsbaum eventually sets out to find the treasure. What he finds is a spellbinding climax to this tale of adventure and of the age-old lure of treasure. Maps and illus. not seen by PW. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In 1887, a four-masted schooner struck a reef off the coast of Ecuador, and two of the ships crew--the captain and his second in command--set out to find a hoard of Inca gold that reportedly had been lost for hundreds of years. They had been given a secret map by the English botanist Richard Spruce, and subsequently they discovered a cave filled with exquisite Incan and pre-Incan artifacts made from gold and silver. They hoped to return with more men and equipment to continue the search. One of the men became ill and died, the other returned to England, where he had the pieces appraised by the British Museum. Revealing that in 1892 the second sailor set sail for North America but fell overboard off the coast of Halifax and drowned, presumably drunk, Honigsbaum endeavors to determine the truth of this mystery by trekking into an uncharted range in the Andes. The result will hold the reader's attention from beginning to end. George CohenCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Few topics fascinate me more than the Inca Empire, so when I found out about this account of a hunt for Atahualpa's gold, I had to read it. Unfortunately, this is not the first time I have come upon a book about an engrossing subject with only the subject matter to hold my interest. Perhaps the fault is mine, as I don't often read nonfiction, but when I'm reading a book that promises a riveting story, I guess I'm looking for something, well...riveting. I believe that Honigsbaum did have a fascinating story to tell; he simply failed to tell it.The man took an expedition across uncharted, inhospitable terrain and could have told anecdote after anecdote about his journey through the Llanganatis range in Ecuador in search of Atahualpa's gold. Instead, he went on for 300 pages blathering about searching through archives, reading journals, and looking at maps. I think that was all a vital part of the story, just not 300 pages worth. A better book would have contained 100 pages or less of the above and spent the next 228 on the expedition. Any life-threatening episodes or adventure were reduced to a couple of sentences rather than told in any sort of riveting way. Biographies of some of the people he interviewed would also make much better reading. While I appreciate the thoroughness of the author's research, I don't think reading about it should be as tedious as the

research itself.I also take issue with the book’s title, as it is NOT Valverde’s gold for which they searched, but Atahualpa’s. It was his in life, and hidden on his behalf after his death, by the most cunning stonemasons the world has ever known. It will be a travesty if anyone ever finds it and unleashes the type of greed from which it was righteously hidden in the first place. I did find the accounts of the curse attached to the treasure and the number of lives lost in search of it to be interesting. Atahualpa’s hidden gold is indeed an intriguing mystery, but this accounting of it was disappointingly dry.

Valverde’s Gold is a first-hand experience of author Mark Honigsbaum’s chase after a legend of lost Inca gold.The story includes legend, some myth, lost and partial treasure maps, and jungle exploration. Sounds pretty cool, right? Sadly Hongisbaum’s journey becomes a confused mess of indistinguishable characters, eventless snippets of his investigation, and ultimately a sadly un-impactful conclusion.This might have been better if turned into fiction or perhaps a shorter story.I’m a very big fan of conquest-era Inca and Spanish, but was disappointed by and uninterested in this book.

First and foremost, this book is more of a literary and investigative adventure. It’s not until the last chapter that the author actually details his own physical search for the fabled treasure in Ecuador of the Incan King Atahualpa. A treasure that by all accounts over the last 500 years may be the most valuable land cache of gold and other precious objects on earth. It provides interesting and entertaining background on the other treasure hunters and explorers who went before him on the search. This leads the reader through labrynthine twists of misinformation, questionable documents/maps and several "characters" the author encounters who come across as gold-crazed swashbucklers. The book is definitely well-researched, but I expected something more along the lines of an Indiana Jones type of real-life adventure and came away with something more along the lines of a day spent in a musty-smelling library....

This book is pretty disappointing. Whilst treasure hunts are inherently interesting (and this one is the biggest of them all), following Honigsbaum is more often than not utterly boring. In each chapter his quest for the lost Incan treasure diverges into a new dead-end avenue, and his research is so hodge-podge that it is difficult to follow.Much of his prose is boring and ought to have been cut short. For instance, he spends a chapter detailing his study of old Spanish documents in Seville, despite the fact that he finds absolutely nothing of import. Historical research is not exactly

something one needs to read about in detail. His prose reads something like, "And suddenly, I put a new search term in the computer! I waited, as the hourglass turned on screen for what seemed an eternity. Then, just as I thought I was about to find the key document, my search came back! 'No Documents Found,' it said." He might then look over an unrelated document, and spend a page talking about a story that has no bearing on the treasure or anything to do with it; it just seems to fill up space in the book.Overall, the author seems out to intrigue his audience enough to buy the book, but that's the extent of his effort. It's like a bad movie in which the preview only shows scenes with pretty girls and cars blowing up. Suck the audience in, because once you've got their money, what do you care? As I labored to get through Valverde's Gold, all I could think was, "I know exactly how this ends... I mean, if he found the treasure, would he really have written this awful book?"

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