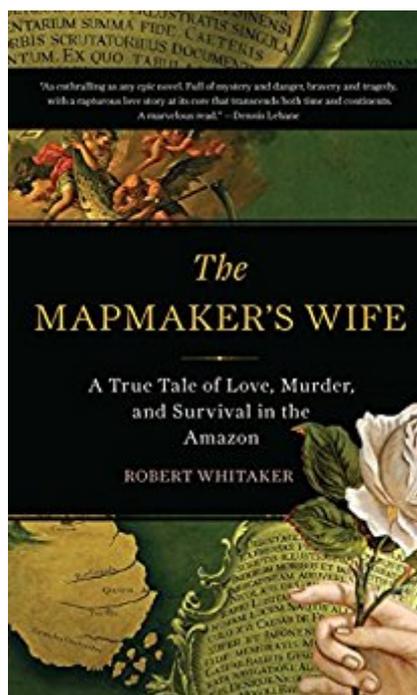


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The Mapmaker's Wife: A True Tale Of Love, Murder, And Survival In The



Synopsis

In the early years of the 18th century, a band of French scientists set off on a daring, decade-long expedition to South America in a race to measure the precise shape of the earth. Like Lewis and Clark's exploration of the American West, their incredible mission revealed the mysteries of a little-known continent to a world hungry for discovery. Scaling 16,000-foot mountains in the Peruvian Andes, and braving jaguars, pumas, insects, and vampire bats in the jungle, the scientists barely completed their mission. One was murdered, another perished from fever, and a third—Jean Godin—nearly died of heartbreak. At the expedition's end, Jean and his Peruvian wife, Isabel Grames, became stranded at opposite ends of the continent, victims of a tangled web of international politics. Isabel's solo journey to reunite with Jean after their calamitous twenty-year separation was so dramatic that it left all of 18th-century Europe spellbound. Her survival—unprecedented in the annals of exploration—was a testament to human endurance, female resourcefulness, and the power of devotion. Drawing on the original writings of the French mapmakers, as well as his own experience retracing Isabel's journey, acclaimed writer Robert Whitaker weaves a riveting tale rich in adventure, intrigue, and scientific achievement. Never before told, *The Mapmaker's Wife* is an epic love story that unfolds against the backdrop of "the greatest expedition the world has ever known."

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Customer Reviews

This is a fascinating true story of adventure and science in what is now Ecuador during the 1730s. The scientific part involves the expedition of members of the Académie française to measure a meridian arc at the equator and to compare its measurement with one measured in "Lapland." The object of the enterprise was to determine whether Isaac Newton's description of Earth as flattened at the poles because of the planet's rotation or elongated at the poles as postulated by other scientists. The French scientists struggled for years in the inhospitable Andean terrain to obtain accurate measurements and proved that Newton correct. One lowly member member of the French team was Jean Godin, who married Isabel Grames of a high-ranking family of the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru. Godin's plan to return to France with his pregnant wife involved exploring the downstream for its entire length and returning upstream to collect his wife. Godin spent 20 years (1749-69) in this enterprise, at which point she set out in search of him and suffered even more horrific experiences than her husband had during the interval.

This is a very well written account of the incredible capacity of humans to suffer tortures that most would consider beyond human endurance. Whitaker skillfully reveals a kernel normally hidden within our psyche that can grow into an infinite source of strength when we are motivated by love, desire for riches or even glory. The description of the mapmakers quest to determine the shape of Earth by trekking through the wilderness of south America provides a slice of world history and science that I had not encountered in hundreds of history books. The only real reason for a novel is to reveal the inner war forever waging within us. Riveting, enthralling, enlightening.

This was an unread (by everyone in my book club) book club read. Although very interesting and informative, it was very a laborious read. I read a lot (2 books a week) and it is one of the first books I had to keep putting down and going back to later. Everyone in my book club was in agreement that the name of the book is misleading. It had about one chapter solely dedicated to the wife and that was at the end of the book. After discussing the book, however, many of the ladies rated it at least a 4 star due to the scientific value, exploration, flora and fauna collection and all around bravery of the

men who were willing to die doing what they did.

I read the *Mapmaker's Wife* because we are currently visiting Ecuador and I enjoy reading stories about places I have been. Even though the story takes place in the 18th Century, I was ecstatic to not only be familiar with many of the locations, but that the place where we are currently staying is directly across the street from where one of the sub-plots occurred! I got a lot more than expected from this true story. The author delves deep into the expedition of a group of French Scientists that came to the equator to conduct the measurements to once and for all solve the argument of the size and shape of the earth. While there, Jean Godin, one of the Assistant's to the expedition marries Isabel, a daughter from one of the local well-to-do families. The couple end up being separated for over a 20-year period. Separated by the hazards of the jungle, both Jean and Isabel never gave up hope to be reunited with one another. Isabel, after waiting years for Jean to come back to Peru, sets out on a journey through the dangerous , something that was unheard of and thought to be impossible for a woman during that time. Though the title of the book is misleading, it is well written and the reader quickly comes to appreciate the in depth research the author conducted in order to put us right there from colonial Peru to deep in the jungle.

One of the most fascinating true stories I have ever read. A group of French scientists travel to what is now Ecuador (then Peru) in order to survey and determine the final correct lines of latitude. Thought this may not sound interesting, it alone is worth the book. One of the scientists falls in love with and marries a girl of the local Peruvian nobility. He then goes down the , ostensibly for a brief time, but when he doesn't return, his wife and a few members of her family go in search of him. Thus begins one of the most totally amazing tales of my long life as a reader. No way would I want to spoil it for others. But if you like real life adventure where this time the hero is a woman, don't miss this book!

A tour de force. Whittaker traces the fortunes of a group of European scientists who travel to Peru to measure the curvature of the earth in comparison to measurements in Europe. The group, having underestimated the difficulty of the task, nonetheless heroically carries on. One marries a Peruvian woman, who devotedly undertakes the follow the wild all the way across the continent to reunite with her husband. Her amazing true adventure takes up the last third of the book. Whitaker enriches his narrative with material from other sources that shed light and place into context the core events. This is a rich reading experience that will enlarge your understanding of a relatively ignored part of

the world.

Having just returned from a cruise in the area where the last half of this story takes place, I was excited to see if I could recognize any of the story's environs. Sadly, I did not. I must say that the title of this book is a little misleading. It should have been "A History of Peru's Subjugation by Europeans". I did learn some interesting facts about France and Spain and their rivalry in trying to claim the territories of the indigenous peoples (read gold and silver). The last third of the book which was about the map maker and his wife was quite good and definitely a heroic story of patience and tribulations. It makes me appreciate some of our modern conveniences and also DEET. I can't imagine being eaten by Mosquitos.

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