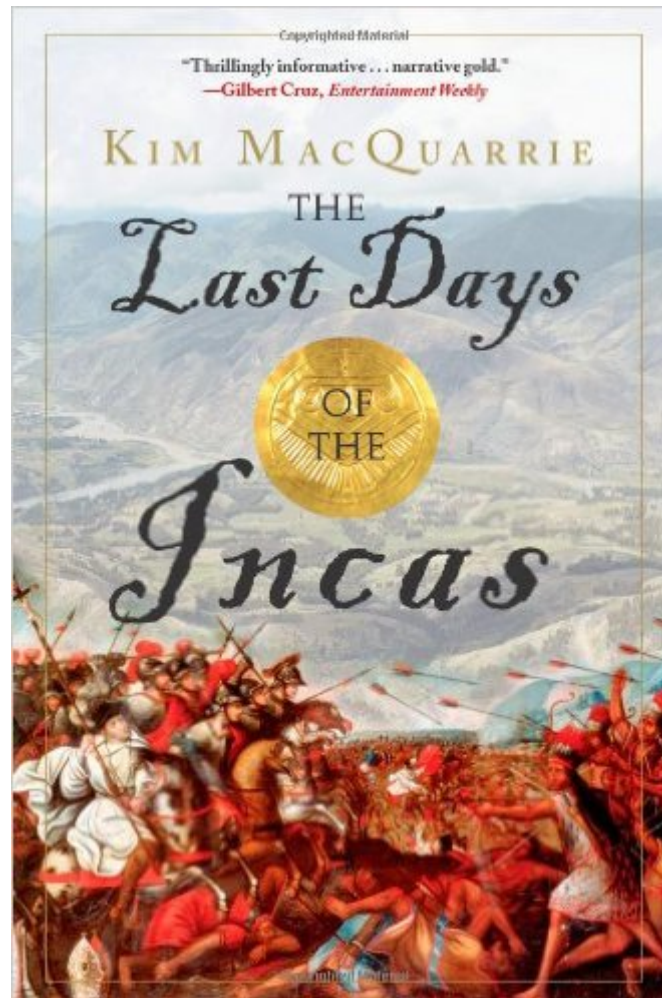


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The Last Days Of The Incas



Synopsis

The epic story of the fall of the Inca Empire to Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro in the aftermath of a bloody civil war, and the recent discovery of the lost guerrilla capital of the Incas, Vilcabamba, by three American explorers. In 1532, the fifty-four-year-old Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro led a force of 167 men, including his four brothers, to the shores of Peru. Unbeknownst to the Spaniards, the Inca rulers of Peru had just fought a bloody civil war in which the emperor Atahualpa had defeated his brother Huascar. Pizarro and his men soon clashed with Atahualpa and a huge force of Inca warriors at the Battle of Cajamarca. Despite being outnumbered by more than two hundred to one, the Spaniards prevailed—due largely to their horses, their steel armor and swords, and their tactic of surprise. They captured and imprisoned Atahualpa. Although the Inca emperor paid an enormous ransom in gold, the Spaniards executed him anyway. The following year, the Spaniards seized the Inca capital of Cuzco, completing their conquest of the largest native empire the New World has ever known. Peru was now a Spanish colony, and the conquistadors were wealthy beyond their wildest dreams. But the Incas did not submit willingly. A young Inca emperor, the brother of Atahualpa, soon led a massive rebellion against the Spaniards, inflicting heavy casualties and nearly wiping out the conquerors. Eventually, however, Pizarro and his men forced the emperor to abandon the Andes and flee to the . There, he established a hidden capital, called Vilcabamba—only recently rediscovered by a trio of colorful American explorers. Although the Incas fought a deadly, thirty-six-year-long guerrilla war, the Spanish ultimately captured the last Inca emperor and vanquished the native resistance.

Book Information

Paperback: 522 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; Reprint edition (June 5, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0743260503

ISBN-13: 978-0743260503

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.3 x 9.2 inches

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

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (232 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #30,967 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in Books > History > Ancient Civilizations > Incan #3 in Books > History > Americas > South America > Peru #22 in Books > History > Historical Study & Educational Resources > Archaeology

Customer Reviews

Mr. MacQuarrie's description of the historic showdown between Pizarro's rag-tag band of 100 Spaniards and thousands of the finest Incan troops is brilliant. He has a real gift for suspense, and the ability of the Spanish to use their armor, artillery, and horses to slaughter several thousand Incans is vividly brought to life. While MacQuarrie indicts the Spanish for a great genocidal crime, he does not, to his credit, romanticize the Incans. The Incans did not form a 10 million person empire by playing softball. They engaged in their own forms of conquest, and the system was extraordinarily hierarchical and oppressive to the ordinary Incan. And the Incan emperor was not some well-meaning character out of a Disney movie. His plan was to slaughter the Spanish and then to castrate a few survivors to turn them into suitable guards for his harem. Still, the rapaciousness of the Spanish is appalling. They had no regard for the Incan civilization and wanted only the gold and silver and the benefits of being the master race. MacQuarrie convincingly shows that the Spanish armor and horses made them invincible on a flat field of battle. This, and the extraordinary centralization of the Incans that made them vulnerable to the kidnap and coopting of their emperor, explains how a band of 160 men could conquer a nation of 10 million. By the time the Incans figured out the need to engage in a guerilla war, it was too late, and they were defeated by the Spanish. The book suffers from three important flaws. First, there is no original scholarship here, though MacQuarrie has done an excellent job of culling through the sources and studies that are available.

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