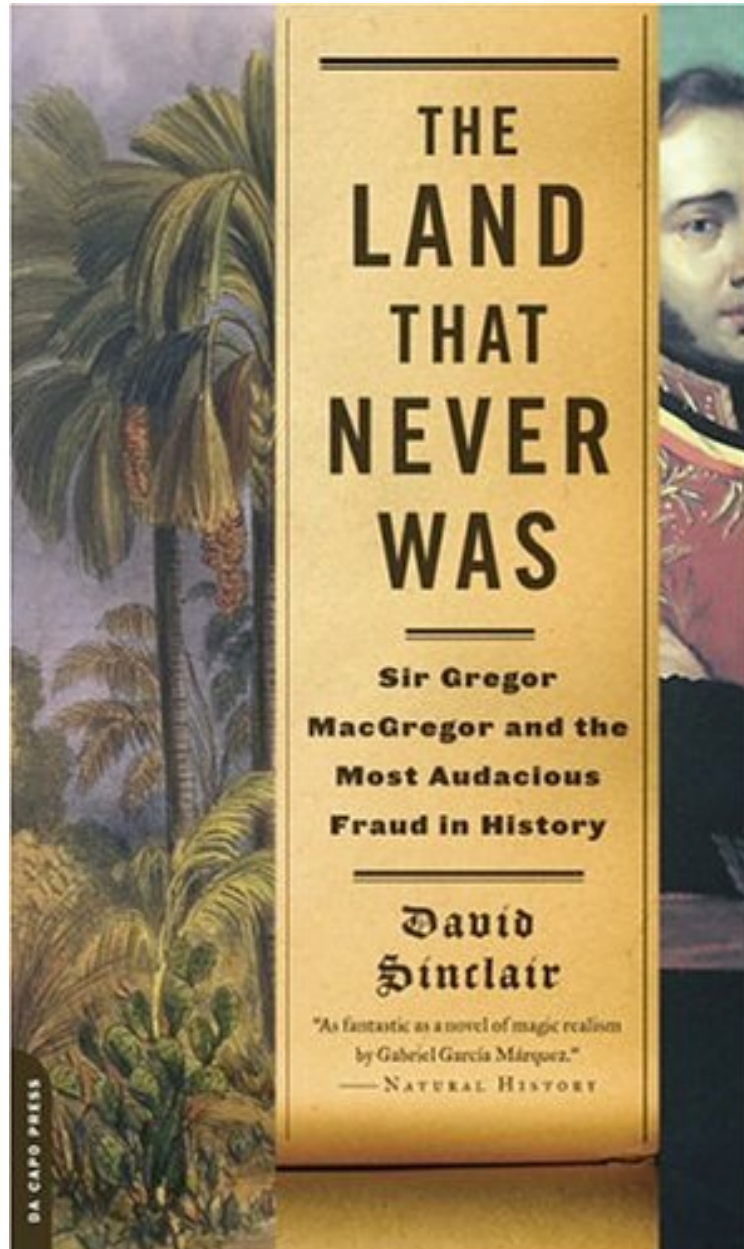


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The Land That Never Was: Sir Gregor Macgregor and the Most Audacious Fraud in History

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Was: Sir Gregor Macgregor and the Most Audacious Fraud in History:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must read for those interested in con artistsBy KundelIf you are deeply interested in con artists, what drives them and mechanics of fraud, then this book is for you.In a number of comments I read that Sinclair extensively quotes other authors and I would disagree with that. He does quote one specific author many times when talking about MacGregor's life before the fraud, probably because this is the best source he has on McGregor's biography. If Mr. Sinclair were alive, I would have definitely written him an email, inquiring as to whether info on MacGregor's life was sparse.But I did not feel that quoting was excessive or unnecessary.The book for me was a very interesting read and I completed it in a couple of days.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Look at a Con Man's Greatest HeistBy Kevin M. DerbyIn "The Land That Never Was: Sir Gregor MacGregor And The Most Audacious Fraud In History," David Sinclair looks at one of the great con jobs of all time. Gregor MacGregor won same fame as a minor military figure and adventurer in the New World after Napoleon's fall. From there, MacGregor conned hundreds of English and Scottish settlers to invest their life savings to buy land on the Mosquito Coast, claiming he led a utopian like nation. Sinclair shows how MacGregor pulled off his con and, with a few minor problems, essentially got away with it. Sinclair is a sharp writer about money and offers a solid biographical account of MacGregor. Still, there are points when Sinclair relies on large chunks of primary source material. That works to some extent, especially when the focus is on MacGregor's victims. There are lessons to be learned from the strange career of Gregor MacGregor and Sinclair offers a readable and valuable account of it. Recommended.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A very good read and recommended for history buffs and lovers of ...By James M.A very good read and recommended for history buffs and lovers of the TV show "American Greed!" It was just shameful how innocent people were taken advantage of. Go ahead and buy this book, you will enjoy it.

Once upon a time, in the heart of Central America, there was a country named Poyais. It was exceptionally rich in resources, civilization, and culture and was ruled by the brave and enlightened Scottish soldier, Sir Gregor MacGregor, who became its ruler after his heroic exploits in the fight for South American independence. On a cold January morning in 1823, a group of Scottish immigrants looking for a new life set sail for this tropical Eden called Poyais.The only catch was that it didn't exist.A month later the ship landed on the swamp-infested Mosquito Coast and the settlers realized that they had become the victims of one of the most elaborate hoaxes in history. The land they had been sold was nonexistent, the banknotes and guidebooks they carried with them were forgeries, their documents were worthless. Poyais was a fiction. The man responsible? Sir Gregor MacGregor. Who was this eccentric, scurrilous man? And why is he such a lovable rogue?

From Publishers WeeklyAuthor, journalist and historian Sinclair (The Pound: A Biography, etc.) turns in this enthralling history to the outrageous and tragic story of Poyais, a South American nation that, as the subtitle indicates, never actually existed. Sir Gregor MacGregor, a pusillanimous and pompous soldier who fought in the South American wars of liberation, concocted the Territory of Poyais in the early 1820s as a means of getting rich off of land sales and financial speculation. Appointing himself "His Highness Gregor, Cazique of Poyais," MacGregor spread word of this purported utopia throughout Britain, describing weather patterns, soil and vegetation, and the government and enviable lack of taxes. He produced currency and a 350-page guidebook. Two ships of ambitious settlers sailed for the Mosquito Coast of Central America in 1822 and 1823, respectively. The settlers, fully convinced of the paradise that awaited them, found nothing but a swampy lagoon on landing. Of the roughly 250 emigrants, fewer than 50 returned to Britain. Some committed suicide; some died of yellow fever, malaria or exhaustion; and others migrated to Belize. As background, Sinclair traces MacGregor's psychological and professional development as an amoral confidence man while leading troops in various campaigns against Spain in Central America. While the book suffers from a cumbersome foreword by Desmond FitzGerald (who traces a distant family connection to MacGregor), Sinclair provides a fascinating glimpse into 19th-century conquest, warfare and utopian ideals. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.From The New YorkerIn 1822 and 1823, some two hundred and fifty emigrants set sail from England for the shores of Poyais, in South America. That country, however, was the invention of a con man called Sir Gregor MacGregor. He had arrived in London, claiming to be the ruler of Poyais, and had published a leather-bound guidebook, filled with maps and crop statistics, to encourage families to settle there. The consequences of his audacious hoax were dire: most of the voyagers died, stranded on an inhospitable coast. Sinclair shows how MacGregor's early experiences as a mercenary taught him skills that proved crucial in his career as a confidence man. He was so persuasive that some of the surviving settlers testified in an affidavit to his worthy intentions. Copyright 2005 The New YorkerFrom Bookmarks MagazineSinclair opens his book with the moment that settlers realize they've been bamboozled and abandoned. He then backtracks to MacGregor's murky pre-Poyais history, where he fabricated military successes, an aristocratic past, and his great land fraud. In retelling this colorful history, Sinclair relies primarily on the records of one of MacGregor's enemies and the swindler's own

pompous lies, but documents contemporary sources as well. Critics cite the story's structure, not its writing, as its strength; the morass of details might detract readers. Still, Sinclair offers remarkable insight into one of the great--if not the greatest--land scheme in history. It is, the San Francisco Chronicle notes, "a tale as pungent as the spices of Poyais, if only there was a Poyais."Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc.