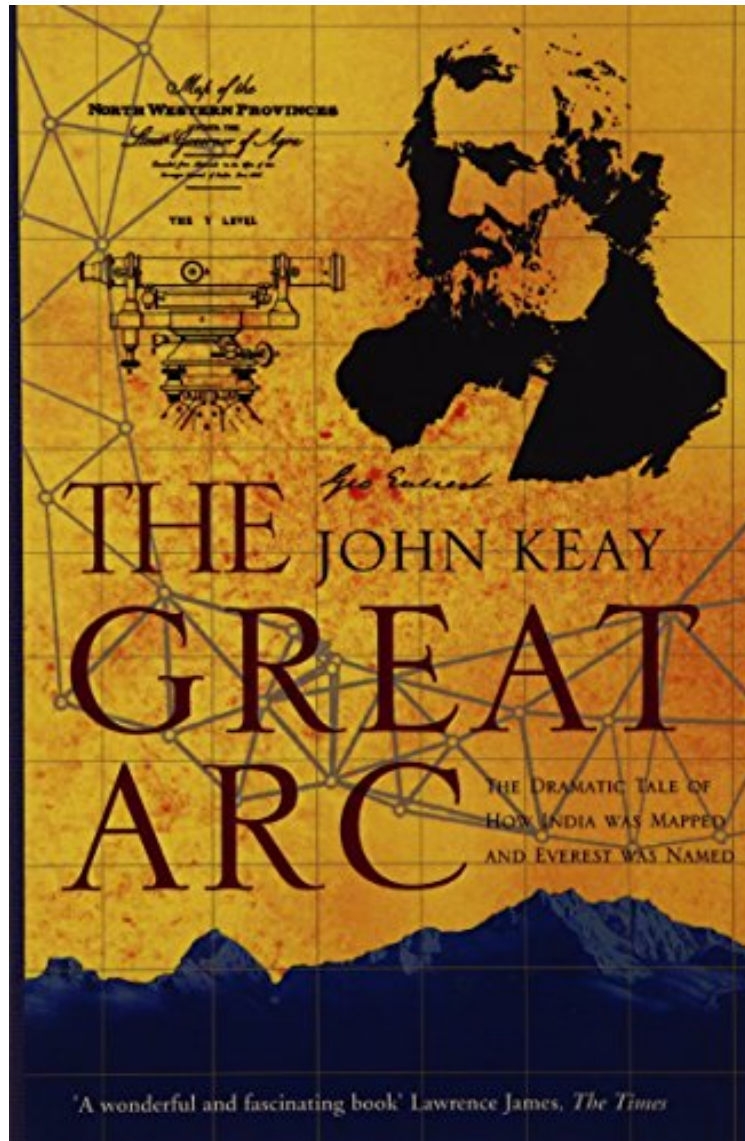


[Mobile library] The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India Was Mapped and Everest Was Named

# The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India Was Mapped and Everest Was Named

John Keay

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**John Keay : The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India Was Mapped and Everest Was Named** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Great Arc: The Dramatic Tale of How India Was Mapped and Everest Was Named:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Review of The Great ArcBy pttThis is an interesting story but it is told in a rather pedantic manner. The author makes one large scientific error and another smaller one. When the survey

party got to the foothills of the Himalayas they expected that the plumb line would be attracted to the mass of these mountains, however, the effect was only one-third of that expected (Pratt, J., 1855, Phil Trans. Roy. Soc. Lon. 145 (53)). This led to the historic discovery of isostasy (equal standing) where the mass of the mountain above sea level was compensated by a less dense mass below these mountains (like an iceberg). Subsequently there developed two major theories for this compensation; the Airy and Pratt, see any geophysical text book. This theory is still being worked. One very good point of this book is that the author traveled the path of the great arc and emphasized how this great study was followed by the public and the scientific community. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. sweat and blood By Customer Being a surveyor and having trained with survey of India I can believe all the hardships these men have gone through to succeed in their scientific endeavour to map the subcontinent. To the effect that points and hills marked by them continue to be found and used by surveyors till today bear witness to their eye for detail and an attitude of working towards creating a system that can stand the vagaries of nature and be monument of perseverance for generations to come. It amazes all of our profession in the subcontinent even today when a point from the past is found which bears the annotation GTS (great trigonometrical survey) though lots of these points were also established in the recent past. Many still survive from the past. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. John Keay Hits a Gold Mine of History By Luis F. Moreno An exhilarating history of two forgotten men, first William Lambton and then his successor Sir George Everest, who by sheer will power overcame enormous contrary forces to lay out the first geodetic survey of India. With more suspense than a Harrison Ford movie, John Keay tells us how the large teams that each Surveyor General commanded, from technicians down to coolies, battled numerous huge obstacles to triangulate the land mass of India. What's more amazing is that these triangles, dozens of miles on a leg, were accurate to within inches. It's hard to imagine the dedication of Lambton in 1820, working at night by kerosene lamp, evaluating complex trigonometrical formulas long before calculators were available. One numerical error in the fourth decimal place would cost months of backtracking, but few were made. Lambton and Everest loved their project. One feels the slow pace of life in 19th century India. Things could stop for years, and then pick up again as if no time had passed. This enterprise was comparable in its time to the Apollo project of the 1960's in effort and scope, but it ran for roughly 60 years! The story culminates with the first precise measurements of the Himalaya Mountains in Nepal. It is fitting that the peak that eventually emerges as the highest of all was given Everest's name (Lambton had died long before). And once again to our amazement, the altitude was correct! Not many historians are comfortable with science and technology. So for every book about the relentless advance of those subjects, there are probably 50 rehashing the political intrigues of Europe. But Keay writes in a fascinating way about men who spent their lives immersed in these fields, and about Lambton's and Everest's faith that the future would belong to science, engineering, and technology as they moved forward on the bedrock of mathematics.

A vivid description of one of the most ambitious scientific projects undertaken in the 19th century, and the men who undertook the measurement of the Himalayas and the mapping of the Indian subcontinent: William Lambton and George Everest. The graphic story of the measurement of a meridian, or longitudinal, arc extending from the tip of the Indian subcontinent to the mountains of the Himalayas. Much the longest such measurement hitherto made, it posed horrendous technical difficulties, made impossible physical demands on the survey parties (jungle, tigers, mountains etc.), and took over 50 years. But the scientific results were commensurate, including the discovery of the world's highest peaks and a new calculation of the curvature of the earth's surface. The Indian Mutiny of 1857 triggered a massive construction of roads, railways, telegraph lines and canals throughout India: all depended heavily on the accuracy of the maps which the Great Arc had made possible.

About the Author John Keay is an author and broadcaster specialising in Asian history and current affairs. His other books include (in addition to his HarperCollins backlist above): *Into India*, *When Men and Mountains Meet*, *Eccentric Travellers and Explorers Extraordinary*. He lives with his wife Julia in Argyll, Scotland.