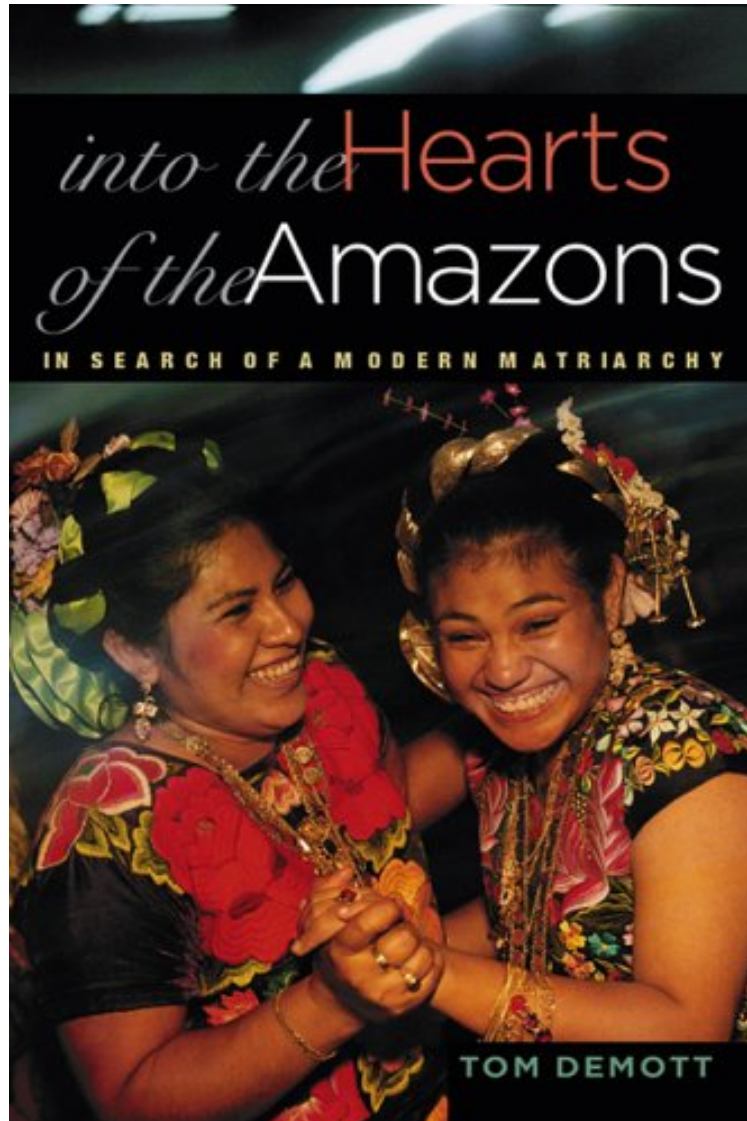


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Into the Hearts of the Amazons: In Search of a Modern Matriarchy

Tom DeMott

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Tom DeMott : Into the Hearts of the Amazons: In Search of a Modern Matriarchy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Into the Hearts of the Amazons: In Search of a Modern Matriarchy:

Into the Hearts of the Amazons is part rousing travel adventure through a little-known world and part popular

ethnography, exploring how Zapotec women earned their legendary status in a remote corner of southern Mexico. To satisfy his curiosity about this culture, Tom DeMott journeyed to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, where he discovered a thriving modern-day matriarchy among the people of the Isthmus cultural crossroads, breeding ground for rebels, and home to a half-million Zapotecs. DeMott integrated himself into the culture by joining in the rites of spring (where women pelt the men with fruit); by interviewing the women who control the marketplace where men are rarely seen; and by honoring the saints with drink and dance at all-night ceremonies. Evoking these singular women and their culture, DeMott tackles a primal question: What would life be like if women, rather than men, had the advantage?"For centuries the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, like a magnet, has attracted travelers, adventurers, scholars, romantics, and rebels. Something about Oaxaca and the Zapotec culture appeals to the curious and restless. DeMott's fine memoir captures the spirit of this quest. It will be of interest to anthropologists and general readers alike."Howard Campbell, author of *Zapotec Struggles*"Driven by an unquenchable personal passion for his subject, Tom DeMott has produced an exceptional narrative that deconstructs the clichés of a Mexican region and a people shrouded in romance and myth. Acutely observed, richly experienced, *Into the Hearts of the Amazons* exposes issues of matriarchy and culture through intimate, often bizarre, and surreal yet indelibly moving close encounters with the people of Juchitán and Tehuantepec."Tony Cohan, author of *On Mexican Time and Mexican Days*

From BooklistTravel writer DeMott traces his fascination with the idea of matriarchal societies to the American women's movement, and says his interest was further piqued by a 1992 anthropological study on Mexico's Isthmus Zapotecs, who supposedly live in a matriarchy, although this is a frequently challenged supposition. DeMott's research into the possibility of a modern-day matriarchy takes him on numerous trips to the state of Oaxaca, first to Juchitán, 350 miles south of Acapulco and "light years from contemporary culture," and later to Tehuantepec. There he attends funerals and religious "street parties," or velas, both of which are traditionally run by women. He also interviews women who bargain every day in the marketplace, where men are never found. DeMott's conclusions are not earthshaking--Zapotec women play a "strong role" in many aspects of their society, but do not rule it, which is a requirement for a true matriarchy--but his engaging travelogue is packed with cultural anecdotes that will interest readers curious about the region and about women's lives. Deborah DonovanCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "Travel writer Demott journeys to the Zapotecs of Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec to discover if their culture could be characterized as a matriarchy. The chapters alternate between Demott's own travel observationsdances, a funeral, Day of the Dead rituals, political protestsand historical and ethnographic investigations into the Zapotec matriarchy question. The book is at its best when portraying the strength and passion of the Isthmus women. Eventually, the reader is led to wonder whether the matriarchy question is less relevant than asking whether the region is better off for its particular social order. Demott's investigative zeal translates into a solid and engaging work of travel narrative."Library Journal (Mar. 2006)