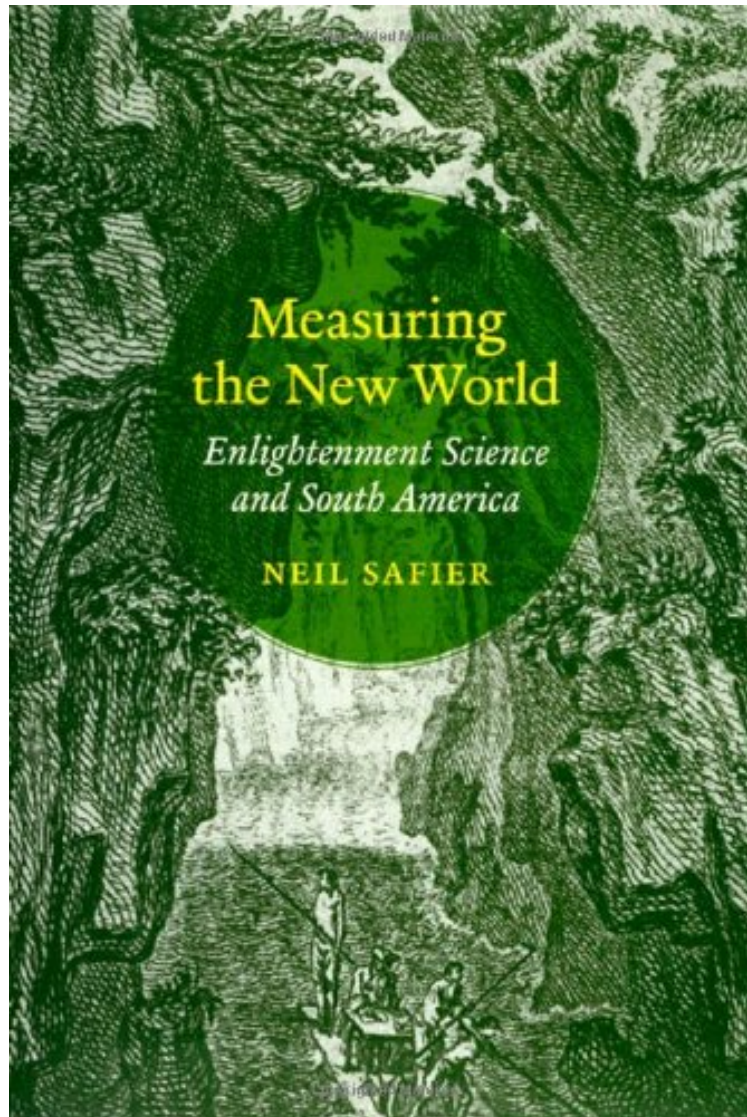


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Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America

Neil Safier

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Prior to 1735, South America was terra incognita to many Europeans. But that year, the Paris Academy of Sciences sent a mission to the Spanish American province of Quito (in present-day Ecuador) to study the curvature of the earth at the Equator. Equipped with quadrants and telescopes, the missions participants referred to the transfer of scientific knowledge from Europe to the Andes as a sacred fire passing mysteriously through European astronomical instruments to observers in South America.

"A deft, thoughtful examination of what happened to European Enlightenment science in an American setting, and of how South America was depicted in Europe as a result of this exploration. What makes Safier's book stand out . . . is the way in which he masterfully expands the range of sites, practices and participants. This is not the story of an expedition, but rather a study of the stories the expedition yielded through words and images."Daniela Bleichmar, American Scientist