



The Race for Timbuktu: In Search of Africa's City of Gold

Frank T. Kryza

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This book is a dramatic true adventure. It is the first book-length account of Laing's expedition. It appeals to readers of travel, exploration, and adventure writing and was extracted in the travel section of national newspaper eg "FT". This is the incredible true story of Alexander Gordon Laing and the race to discover Timbuktu during the early part of the 19th century - a time when the African continent was still largely uncharted. In the first decades of 19th century, no place burned more brightly in the imagination of European geographers and fortune hunters, than the lost city of Timbuktu. Like the mythical city of El Dorado, the very real Timbuktu held the promise of wealth and fame. Whoever got there first was guaranteed worldwide renown. Yet, though many had tried, no European explorer had been there and returned since the Middle Ages. In 1824, the French Geographical Society offered a cash prize for the first expedition from any nation to return from Timbuktu. The British, unwilling to depend on the fate of one explorer, sent several "African travelers" on their way. "The Race for Timbuktu" focuses on two of these men: Alexander Gordon Laing, the book's protagonist and "voice," and Hugh Clapperton, the man who would become his greatest rival. The book follows Laing and Clapperton on their arduous journeys across the unforgiving Sahara, in constant battle against the elements, illness, attack, and time, to be the first white man to reach the fabled gates of Timbuktu. The story of their expeditions also serves as a narrative history of the European colonization of Africa, the "Great Scramble" that resulted in nearly every square yard of Africa occupied by European nations. "The Race for Timbuktu" offers a close personal look at the extraordinary people and pivotal events of 19th century African exploration that changed the course of history and the shape of the modern world.

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