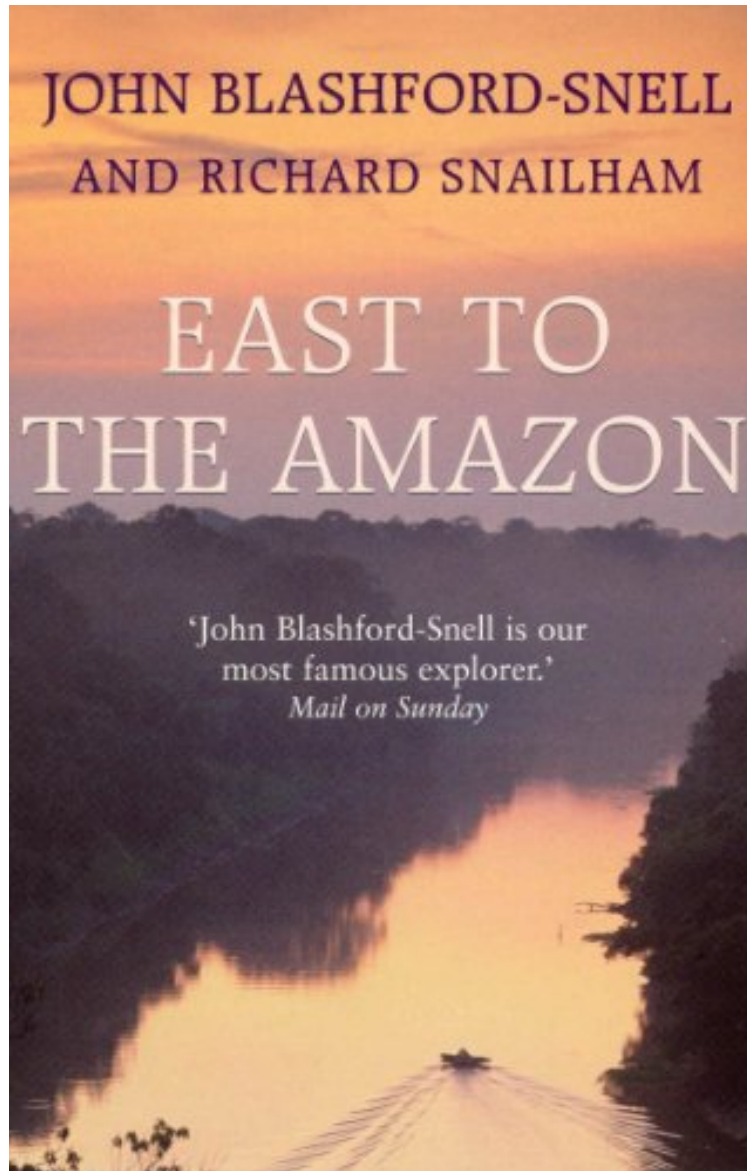


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## East to the Amazon: In Search of Great Paititi and the Trade Routes of the Ancients

*John Blashford-Snell, Richard Snailham*

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The mythical land of Great Paititi, east of the Andes, attracted conquistadors, archaeologists, adventurers and even, more recently, Nazis fleeing justice. John Blashford-Snell has always felt the lure of lost cities and in particular of Paititi, the city the Spanish conquistadors called El Dorado. In May 2001, he set off through dense rainforest with a full team of jungle-bashers, archaeologists, soldiers and scientists to reach the area where the dangerously snake-infested ruins were believed to be. What they found was not a city but what seemed to be an ancient centre for ritual. The success of two earlier expeditions, Kota Mama I and II, had shown that ancient peoples could have sailed boats made of reed from Lake Titicaca southwards and eastwards to the Atlantic. Now Blashford-Snell set off to prove that the ancient peoples of Paititi could have used the long succession of ever-widening rivers that end at the mouth of the Amazon as trade routes to the Old World. Kota Mama III, a reed trimaran, with three jaguar figureheads, faced a frightening 500 kilometres of rapids to prove the point. This account of a hair-raising journey through the little-known heart of South America is in the tradition of the best adventurous travel.