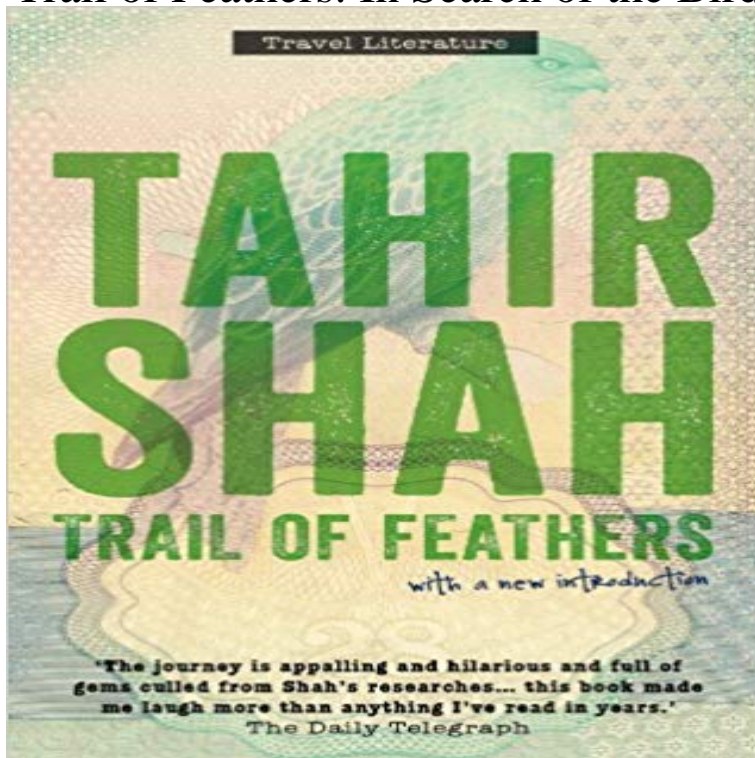


Trail of Feathers: In Search of the Birdmen of Peru



Enthralled by a line from the chronicle of a sixteenth-century monk, which said that the Incas flew like birds over the jungle, and by the recurring theme of flying in Peruvian folklore, Tahir Shah set out to discover whether the Incas really did fly or glide above the jungles of Peru. Or was the Spanish cleric alluding to flight of a different kind – flight inspired by a powerful hallucinogen? After gathering equipment in London and advice, not least from Wilfred Thesiger, the long quest begins. First, to the mountains of Peru and a trek to Machu Picchu, the Incas' most sacred city. Then on to the mountain city of Cusco and a mysterious island on the great glittering expanse of Lake Titicaca. Picking up clues as he goes, the author's trail takes him on to the coast and through the desert, to the immense animal-like etchings which form the Nazca Lines, and a remote burial ground for 30,000 mummified corpses. And finally to an epic river journey up the Amazon to discover the secrets of the Shuar, a tribe of infamous savagery living in the deep jungle of the Upper Amazon. In the course of this journey we learn much about the Spanish treatment of the Incas, about Peruvian folklore and magic, about the great but brief Amazon rubber boom of the nineteenth century, about head-shrinking, shamanic knowledge and plant-based hallucinogens. Even for a traveller so used to surreal adventures, there are many strange encounters and physical challenges – gruesome but often hilarious – among madmen and dreamers, sorcerers, con-men and jungle experts, before Tahir Shah can at last discover the truth about the Birdmen of Peru. About the Author Tahir Shah is the author of fifteen books, many of which chronicle a wide range of outlandish journeys through Africa, Asia and the Americas. For him, there's nothing so important as deciphering the hidden underbelly of the lands through which he travels. Shunning well-trodden

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