



# Timbuktu Chronicles 1493-1599, Ta'rikh al Fattash

By Christopher Wise, translator

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**Timbuktu Chronicles 1493-1599, Ta'rikh al Fattash** By Christopher Wise, translator

Some five hundred years ago, the Askia Muhammad founded the Songhay Dynasty of the Askiyas, which flourished for more than a century in Sahelian West Africa. The Askia Muhammad administered his kingdom from Gao, Mali, although many of his most loyal followers were located in Timbuktu, Mali. The Timbuktu based scribe al hajj Mahmud Kati was a close friend of the Askia Muhammad, who accompanied the famous Songhay leader during his pilgrimage to Mecca. The *Tarikh al fattash* is an eyewitness account of the rise and fall of the Songhay Empire, told from Kati's perspective as a key participant in many of the most important events in the era of the Askiyas. Wise's *The Timbuktu Chronicles, 1493-1599* is a translation of the Octave Houdas and Maurice Delafosse's rendition of the *Tarikh al fattash*, which was compiled from three versions of the text that surfaced in the early twentieth century, and that were edited by Houdas and Delafosse in 1913. It includes a new introduction by Wise, as well as the original introduction and scholarly notes of Houdas and Delafosse. Although long valued as the most important historical document of the medieval period, Kati's chronicle is also a literary achievement that is comparable to the writings of figures like Chaucer, Rabelais, and Montaigne. Wise's introduction and study questions accompanying this translation provide contextualizing information for the non-specialist. The *Tarikh al fattash* is essential reading for all students of African literature and history.

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#### Review

"Thanks... to Wise and Abu Taleb for resurrecting *Tarikh al-Fattash*, .... This fifteenth century text is a marvel of literature and history and its availability in this excellent English translation will provide an important new treasure for those who are interested in the history and civilization of Islam." -- Ricardo Rene Laremont

"Wise's new volume with its very readable translation and helpful introduction performs an important service for African literary studies." -- Fallou Ngom

"This five hundred year old chronicle [is] the best, the most significant and the most useful on the Songhay empire." -- Toyin Falola, University Distinguished Professor, University of Texas at Austin

#### From the Inside Flap

"Christopher Wise deserves both our admiration and gratitude for making available to the wider world this five hundred year old chronicle--the best, the most significant and the most useful on the Songhay empire. The premodern is connected with the modern; old Africa and new Africa are blended; and texts and interpretations are united to understand the past, to teach about the past, allowing us to reflect more profoundly on an era that we continue to hold in awe for its achievements, the endurance of its ideas, the brilliance of its scholars, and the grandeur of its institutions." -- Toyin Falola, University Distinguished Professor and the Frances Higginbotham Nalle Centennial Professor, University of Texas at Austin, and the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere Chair of Modern Africa At-Large, Benue State University, Nigeria

#### From the Back Cover

"The appearance of Mahmud Kati's *Ta'rikh al Fattash* in English translation is long overdue. In the years to come, we may look forward to the appearance of more neglected classics from Timbuktu and elsewhere in West African, in both Arabic and Ajami. Wise's new volume, with its very readable translation and helpful introduction, performs an important service for African literary studies." -- Fallou Ngom, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the African Language Program, Boston University

"Thanks need to be given to Christopher Wise and Hala Abu Taleb for resurrecting *Ta'rikh al Fattash* or *The Timbuktu Chronicles*, which is now available in English because of their translation. This fifteenth century text is a marvel of literature and history and its availability in this excellent English translation will provide an important new treasure for those who are interested in the history and civilization of Islam." -- Ricardo Rene Laremont, Professor of Political Science and Sociology, SUNY Binghamton

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