

David Livingstone

Born in 1813 to strict Scottish parents, David Livingstone had planned to become a Calvinist missionary. After putting himself through school, Dr. Livingstone was ready to spread the Gospel to the farthest reaches of the earth. He had always assumed that he would go to China, but a twist of fate shipped him off to Africa where he succeeded in making some of the most spectacular discoveries of his day. But his drive to explore eventually led to his demise.

As one of seven children of a modest Scottish family, Livingstone learned from the start the virtues of hard work, piety and education. By the age of ten he was working in a cotton factory to help support the family, but managed to complete his studies. When British churches in the 1830s put out a call for missionaries to Asia, Livingstone could not resist the chance to escape. Livingstone studied for two years to receive an advanced degree, which would guarantee the adventure he sought.

Unfortunately, history intervened in Livingstone's plans. Just as Livingstone was ready to embark to Asia, China became embroiled in the Opium Wars. Livingstone's trip was cancelled. It appeared that Livingstone's adventures would have to wait until China stabilized, but everything changed after a conversation with a South African missionary named Robert Moffat. Moffat convinced Livingstone that his missionary services were desperately needed in Africa. In 1841, Dr. Livingstone landed in Cape Town in modern-day South Africa.

Moffat was not wrong. Livingstone found his services in high demand as he set out to convert the indigenous populations. The more he worked beside the native Africans, the more he came to despise the white African Boers inhabiting much of the land. As Livingstone devoted himself to his missionary work, he also became a vocal anti-slavery advocate. His rally against the practice of slavery made him a staunch enemy of the Boers and the Portuguese.

Livingstone's travels from village to village introduced him to parts of southern Africa never explored by other Europeans, and sparked his interest in exploring Africa's interior. Livingstone pushed north into the Kalahari visiting places never known by other Europeans. Britain recognized his valor and Livingstone became part of a team sent to explore Lake Ngami. Their discoveries resulted in the presentation of a gold medal from the Royal Geographic Society. Believing that his explorations would open up legitimate trade in Africa and thus eliminate the slave trade, Livingstone pressed citing the infamous words "I shall open a path to the interior, or perish."

In between his peregrinations, Livingstone married Robert Moffat's daughter Mary in 1845. The daughter of a missionary such as Moffat, Mary was not new to Africa. She traveled by Livingstone's side for seven years before he forced her to return to Britain with the children. Using African Makololo guides, Livingstone charted a path to the Atlantic coast. He reached Luanda in 1854, saw the rapids of the Zambezi which he named Victoria Falls, and entered Mozambique in 1856.

When Livingstone returned to England in 1856, he was lauded a national hero. He wrote *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (1857) as a narrative of his adventures. So impressed were the Europeans, that Livingstone's lecture tours were wildly popular.

Livingstone could not stay long from Africa and continued his explorations in 1858. Livingstone returned to better explore the Zambezi River, but this time he was not a solitary explorer among his favored African guides. The other Europeans accompanying him broke out in fights and the crew nearly mutinied. By 1862, his wife Mary had died and his son had failed to arrive in Africa as planned because he was busy fighting in the US Civil War.

But Livingstone pushed forward and by 1893 his discoveries had enabled Britain to claim its first interior colony, the British Central Africa Protectorate (modern-day Republic of Malawi). It was at this time that Livingstone became obsessed with the idea of finding the source of the Nile River. Livingstone set out in 1866 with only his Asian/African crew, but the trip was a difficult one. Unhappy with their living conditions, much of the crew deserted Livingstone and fled to Zanzibar – an island off the coast of

Tanzania. Fearful of being condemned as deserters, the crew lied that Ngoni tribes had killed Dr. Livingstone en route. Word spread quickly to Britain where those following Livingstone's career speculated on the possibility of his death.

As rumors circulated in Britain, Dr. Livingstone continued his trek, reaching all the way to the Lualaba, which led to the Congo River. But Dr. Livingstone's journey began to take a toll on his health. A lion had already mauled him. His trips into the interior meant exposure to bilharzia, malaria and cholera. When he returned to Lake Tanganyika in 1871, he was nearly bed ridden and low on both medical and food supplies.

Henry Stanley, upon his arrival to Lake Tanganyika, found the great explorer seriously ill. Henry Stanley, a journalist with the New York Herald, had been sent to investigate if Livingstone truly lived. Working off several leads, Stanley finally located Livingstone, greeting him with the famous line: Dr. Livingstone, I presume? . Stanley tried to convince the ailing Livingstone to return with him to England, but Livingstone vehemently refused, and Stanley was forced to leave him behind.

Livingstone recovered with supplies left by Stanley and quickly resumed his search for the source of the Nile. It proved to be his only incomplete voyage, as Livingstone died en route in 1873. His remaining loyal crew found him dead at his bedside. The crew removed Livingstone's viscera and heart, and then dried his body. They then carried Livingstone by hand over 1000 miles back to the coast where his body was shipped to England for burial in Westminster Abbey.

Dr. Livingstone's explorations provided valuable information about the interior of Africa that no one had ever seen. Unfortunately his discoveries led to the inevitable colonization of the territory. But Dr. Livingstone is also responsible for ending the slave trade, which he so strongly detested. Although Dr. Livingstone's body resides in England, his heart remains in Africa at the place where his crew buried it upon his death.

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