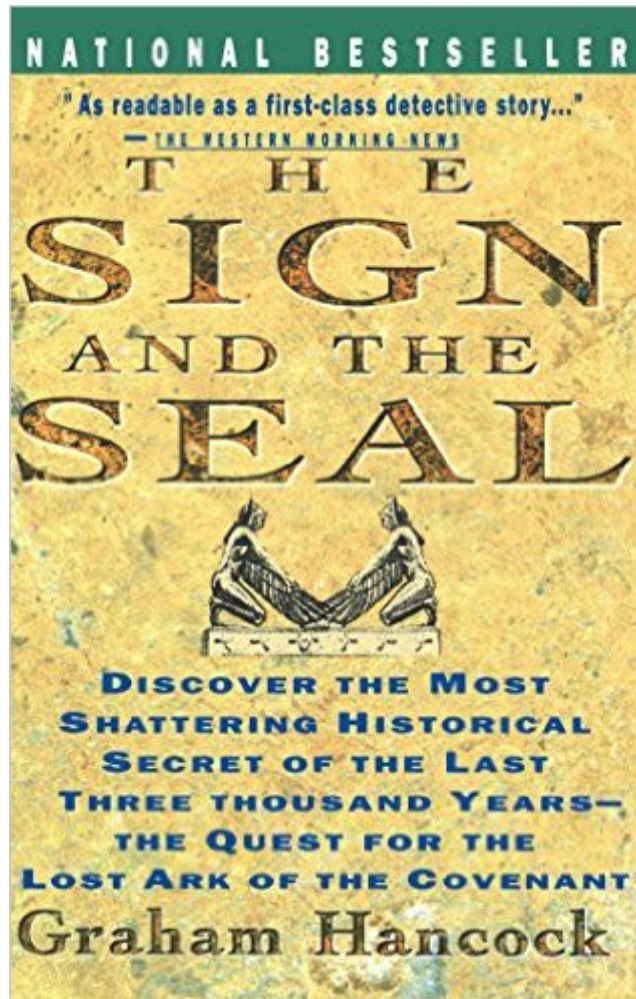


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Sign And The Seal: The Quest For The Lost Ark Of The Covenant



Synopsis

The fact of the Lost Ark of the Covenant is one of the grand historical mysteries of all time. To believers, the Ark is the legendary vessel holding the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments. The Bible contains hundreds of references to the Ark's power to level mountains, destroy armies, and lay waste to cities. The Ark itself, however, mysteriously disappears from recorded history sometime after the building of the Temple of Solomon. After ten years of searching through the dusty archives of Europe and the Middle East, as well as braving the real-life dangers of a bloody civil war in Ethiopia, Graham Hancock has succeeded where scores of others have failed. This intrepid journalist has tracked down the true story behind the myths and legends -- revealing where the Ark is today, how it got there, and why it remains hidden. Part fascinating scholarship and part entertaining adventure yarn, tying together some of the most intriguing tales of all time -- from the Knights Templar and Prester John to Parsival and the Holy Grail -- this book will appeal to anyone fascinated by the revelation of hidden truths, the discovery of secret mysteries.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an exceedingly interesting book, albeit controversial, for anyone interested in "history's mysteries." For those of us who have pored through the works of Zecharia Sitchin and dared to ponder questions that the scientists and religious authorities regard as sacrilegious (after all, science itself is a religion), this is especially interesting material. You don't have to believe in Hancock's theories (although he offers a weighty, serious argument for them) in order to love this book. Even if you regard the idea of the Ark of the Covenant resting in Ethiopia (or the notion that

the Ark even exists) as preposterous, you can still enjoy this book in the same way you can delight in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories; this book is about solving a mystery. Just as Holmes' series of adventures often resulted in no real, firm, graspable truth, so is the case here. This detracts little from the story, however. The final judgment is left up to you, the reader, which is the trademark of any substantive mystery--only in this way can the great and unattainable "truth," in its most esoteric sense, be glimpsed. Granted, Hancock is not a scientist or theologian, but this may in fact serve as his greatest qualification for tackling the types of lofty problems he embraces. After all, the vast majority of scientists and theologians dismiss without consideration the sorts of "wild" ideas discussed in this book; if not for the open minds of men like Mr. Hancock, many truths that have now been established would remain jokes told by the arrogant "experts" over tea--take, as an example, the discovery of Troy. As for the content of this book, it truly is a mix of history, religion, and archaeology.

Hancock's book is an entertaining account of an enthusiast who, from his own admission, was largely ignorant of his subject when he set out to discover the truth about it. The book has three main flaws. Whether by design or cultural self-centeredness, Hancock is too interested in searching for Knights Templar involvement, although the so-called Templar crosses in Ethiopia/Eritrea date from the 5th century AD. Linking the Ark to medieval Europeans sells books [Munro-Hay's Aksum (1991) and The Ark of the Covenant (1999) are far more informative but don't sell outside academia because European historical romanticism is absent in his works]. Secondly, Hancock had little understanding of the Kebra Nagast, which is a combination of two separate works, the Sheba-Menelik Cycle dating from oral (10th century BC) and written (pre-400BC) Semitic sources (Josephus summarises it (ca.90AD); and the Caleb Cycle (ca 518 AD). When Isaac's team compiled the Kebra Nagast around 1314 AD they used an Arabic Sheba-Menelik Cycle and a Ge'ez Caleb Cycle and then put in their own comments to try and make sense of the bizarre geography of the Sheba-Menelik Cycle. This included references to Cairo and Alexandria, which didn't exist in Solomon's day, something Hancock overlooked. Hancock is hardly alone in his third and major miscalculation. It is now generally accepted in mainstream archaeology that no evidence exists in Israel/Palestine of the events and places described in the Old Testament up until the Babylonian captivity. The site of modern day Jerusalem in Solomon's day was covered by a few small villages. There was no great city and nothing has been found of Omri's even more magnificent capital in Samaria.

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