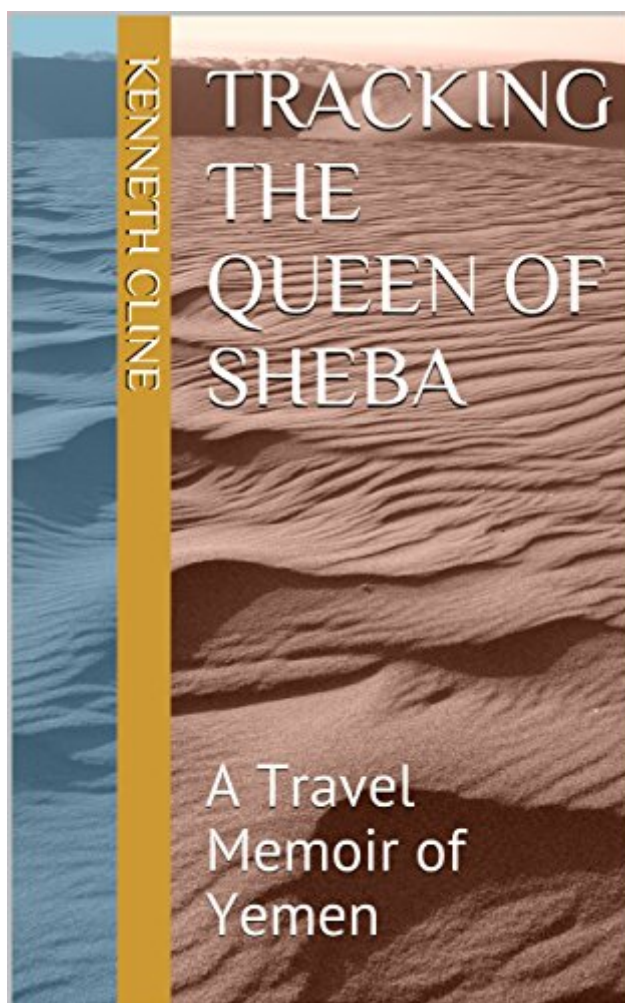


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Tracking The Queen Of Sheba: A Travel Memoir Of Yemen



Synopsis

The author's account of a journey of exploration he took with a group of archaeologists to one of the most remote and exotic regions of the world, Yemen. In ancient times, Arabia Felix, or "Happy Arabia," was home to a wealthy and advanced civilization that sent one of its rulers, the Queen of Sheba, on a famous expedition to visit King Solomon, her camels laden with gold and spices. Today, the country is an impoverished backwater, riven by civil war and tribal feuds. In this memoir, the author recounts the trip he took in 1984 to the Wadi al-Jubah, in the far eastern part of Yemen bordering Saudi Arabia's "Empty Quarter" Desert. The archaeologists were on a quest to discover more about the ancient civilization known as Saba, which was almost certainly the equivalent to Biblical "Sheba." Come along on the journey as the group struggles to conduct their research among heavily armed tribesmen notoriously suspicious of outsiders -- to the point where village boys will pursue a lone foreigner with a hail of rocks. And learn too what conclusions the group reached about the power of ancient Saba (Sheba) and the story of its famous queen. Highlighting the contradictions and ambiguities in the existing archaeological data, contrast the very different interpretations reached by two of the most eminent South Arabian scholars of their day, Albert Jamme and Gus Van Beek, regarding the identity and role of the mysterious queen. And learn too how this particular group of archaeologists was directly following in the footsteps of explorer Wendell Phillips, author of Qataban and Sheba, whose legendary 1950-52 excavations in Yemen could have served as the plot for an Indiana Jones movie. Things had calmed down a bit by 1984, but Yemen still remained a place where westerners ventured at their own risk.

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Customer Reviews

I was particularly intrigued when I heard about this book because for many years I was connected to someone who was a descendant of Sheba and Solomon by virtue of having been born to the Menelik dynasty of Ethiopia. Over the years, I had heard the family legends about her and the time she spent in the Gonder/Lake of Tana region of Ethiopia but beyond that, very little is known. With only a stela to corroborate her presence in the region, I was very curious to find out more from an archaeological perspective because we all know family histories are not always accurate. Cline's narrative about his experiences as he accompanied a team of experts into one of the most remote and isolated regions is told with wry humor as he describes his twelve days with esteemed archeologists and other participants in the adventure. His descriptions of the area around Sana'a, Yemen from where the expedition was launched conjure up images of scenes from Lawrence of Arabia as the expedition traveled over dunes and desolate territory to the excavation site. You get a real sense of how determined these people were to unravel a mystery that has been fodder for academics and amateur explorers for, well, hundreds if not thousands of years. Descriptions of the terrain and the local inhabitants and their awe of outsiders present the reality that traveling in that region was not without serious risk, given the prevalence of locals armed with Kalashnikovs! Cline's writing is clear, concise, and engaging and my only disappointment was that it wasn't longer! Tracking the Queen of Sheba is a fascinating and entertaining read!

Author Ken Cline provides a very in-depth, enlightening and humorous recounting of his journey through one of the most inhospitable areas on the Planet, Yemen, in Tracking The Queen of Sheba. The Author writes in such a descriptive style that you almost transported into the arid, dusty landscape that has played such a vital role in both historical and biblical texts. The portrayal of his encounters with locals and fellow researchers adds a very human touch to a land so accustomed to hardship. Biblical scholars will no doubt appreciate Cline's accounting into one of the Bible's most

interesting and controversial characters, Sheeba. I highly recommend this book for anyone looking to gain greater understanding and appreciation of the history of a distant and often misunderstood land that has a very important story to tell.

The writer comes from the same period of time as I did: he was a Liberal Arts major in the sixties who graduated with no particular idea of what he would do with his degree. If you are in your 60's or 70's, you will relate. He ends up on an archeological dig in Yemen observing and commenting on the profession itself, the country of Yemen and its history, and the everyday people. It's funny, interesting, informative and full of little surprises. It pulls you along page after page. Did they find the Queen of Sheba? You'll have to read it yourself. Kudos to Ken Cline!

This is a wonderfully written book, a great adventure, and a great read! Ken's marvelous writing and descriptive skill makes you feel like a member of the expedition and an actual observer of everything he experienced. A wonderful true story. I highly recommend it.

Easy read. I was hoping for more details on Yemen history and daily life.

Very interesting approach to presenting a perspective on history

Cline describes the work and surroundings of a small dig in an area of Yemen that's associated with the ancient civilization of Sheba. The dig was not really a search for the legendary queen, who, as the author points out, probably was not a queen per se, but more of a trade negotiator, assuming that in fact she even existed. The book is brief and doesn't go into much detail on the dig, archaeology, history, or the local culture, but gives a flavor of each. While it's much older, Agatha Christie's book, *Come, Tell Me How You Live* is a far more extensive layperson's perspective on Middle East archaeology digs. This book, by contrast, is more of a pleasant chat or collection of a few letters home.

I first grew intrigued by the story of the queen of Sheba when I saw Piero della Francesca's painting of her meeting with Solomon. I was surprised to learn that in scientific terms, little is known for sure about the queen, including her name for certain where she came from. Ken Cline's account of his journalistic foray into that politically and environmentally inhospitable region illustrates why, despite tantalizing clues, certainty about the queen has eluded scientists and scholars for centuries.

His reportage reminds us that the human element is as critical to the effectiveness of archeological expeditions as modern tools and methods.

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