



The Road to Ubar: Finding the Atlantis of the Sands

By Nicholas Clapp

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The most fabled city in ancient Arabia was Ubar, described in the Koran as "the many-columned city whose like has not been built in the entire land." But like Sodom and Gomorrah, Ubar was destroyed by God for the sins of its people. Buried in the desert without a trace, it became known as "the Atlantis of the Sands." Over the centuries, many searched for it unsuccessfully, including Lawrence of Arabia, and skepticism grew that there had ever been a real place called Ubar. Then in the 1980s Nicholas Clapp stumbled on the legend. Poring over ancient manuscripts, he discovered that a slip of the pen in a.d. 1460 had misled generations of explorers. In satellite images he found evidence of ancient caravan routes that were invisible from the ground. Finally he organized two expeditions to Arabia with a team of archaeologists, geologists, space scientists, and adventurers. After many false starts, dead ends, and weeks of digging, they uncovered a remarkable walled city with eight towers, thi

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

What is it about the inhospitable corners of the world that so attracts the imagination? Scott in the Antarctic, Hillary on top of Everest, and a multitude of wanderers--from Wilfred Thesiger and T. E. Lawrence to Gertrude Bell--wandering through the vast, empty sands of "the empty quarter" in what is now Saudi Arabia; each of these explorers has been drawn to places most of us would never think of going and found there an unexpected window onto their own souls. In *The Road to Ubar*, filmmaker Nicholas Clapp follows in the footsteps of earlier visitors to the Arabian peninsula as he seeks the legendary city of Ubar. Going back at least two millennia, stories about a vast city filled with gold that disappeared almost in an instant haunt the literature and lore of Arabia. And for almost as long as the stories have been around, so have the rogues and dreamers who have tried to find it. His interest sparked by the accounts of earlier travelers in the region such as Thesiger and Bertram Thomas, Clapp decided to put together his own team in hopes of finding and filming the lost city.

Using both modern tools (photographs taken from space, courtesy of NASA) as well as old ones (maps, descriptions, and written accounts), Clapp and his team slowly pieced together the clues until they arrived, at last, at the site where they would spend the next four years digging. How they got to the end of *The Road to Ubar* and what they found there is at the heart of this unusual travel memoir.

From Publishers Weekly

For centuries, the city of Ubar was the object of legend, quests and uncertainty. An ancient trading outpost in Arabia, it had, according to the Koran, sunk into the desert sands as a result of God's wrath upon its sinful population. In the 1980s, Clapp, a documentary filmmaker, undertook to find the city. After exhaustive research that took him from ancient texts to satellite photos, he eventually led an expedition that finally located Ubar in what is now Oman. Clapp first learned of the then-chimerical city in the early 1980s, when working on a film about the oryx (a tough and graceful desert antelope). His interest was piqued further as he read of 19th-century British expeditions, which he synthesizes along with other relevant tales. Like Indiana Jones, Clapp is as comfortable in the library as in reconnaissance helicopters or on the sands, and his efforts to separate myth from possible reality make for a gripping intellectual adventure. Clapp's team, including his wife and expedition manager, Kay, and a host affable experts, weren't sure what they'd found in a giant sinkhole until they spent weeks digging and putting pieces of pottery together with knowledge of the ancient trade in frankincense. What they found was not only Ubar but also a fitting resolution to Clapp's engaging story of the excitement of discovery, of a mystery solved and of the spirit of adventure.

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From School Library Journal

YA--When Clapp flew to the Sultanate of Oman to film a National Geographic documentary, he developed a love for this desert that would lead him to one of the top scientific discoveries of 1992. On that trip he heard of a fabled city destroyed by God for its sins of greed. It was in a place known as the Empty Quarter, but explorers, including Lawrence of Arabia, had failed to locate it. Clapp became obsessed. With only the slimmest of clues with which to work, he began to seek other ways to search for Ubar. Almost on a whim, he contacted NASA, hoping to use its imaging technology that could see through up to 18 feet of sand dunes. After several strokes of amazing luck, his contacts successfully retrieved and enhanced a satellite image that clearly indicated a major caravan route. Though delayed by lack of funding and the military operations of Desert Storm, he managed to launch two archaeological expeditions that eventually uncovered the lost city.

Clapp's unusual interdisciplinary approach utilized the cultural myths relating to Ubar, as well as the historical chronicles and maps, and applied the hard scientific analysis of satellite images. Not only is the discovery aptly chronicled here but the author also gives an excellent view of the culture of ancient Arabia. The story is told with all the intrigue and humor of a low-key Indiana Jones adventure, and is documented with voluminous notes and a bibliography. It also includes black-and-white drawings, diagrams, and maps. A thoroughly engrossing book.

Robin Deffendall, Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, VA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Deborah Mele:

Here thing why that The Road to Ubar: Finding the Atlantis of the Sands are different and reliable to be yours. First of all examining a book is good but it really depends in the content from it which is the content is as tasty as food or not. The Road to Ubar: Finding the Atlantis of the Sands giving you information deeper including different ways, you can find any e-book out there but there is no reserve that similar with The Road to Ubar: Finding the Atlantis of the Sands. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your current eyes about the thing that will happened in the world which is maybe can be happened around you. It is easy to bring everywhere like in park, café, or even in your approach home by train. For anyone who is having difficulties in bringing the branded book maybe the form of The Road to Ubar: Finding the Atlantis of the Sands in e-book can be your alternate.

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