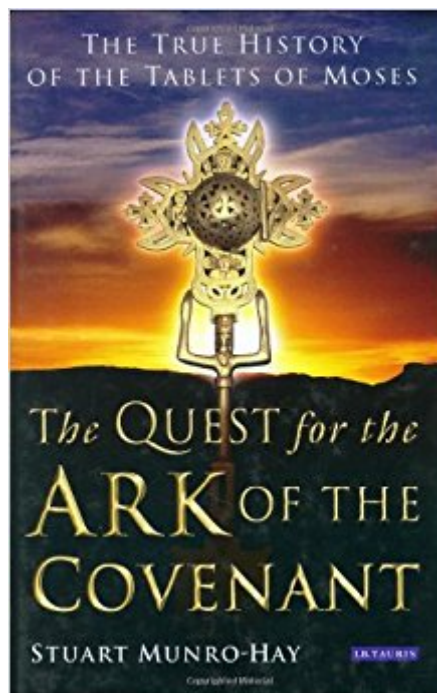




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# The Quest For The Ark Of The Covenant: The True History Of The Tablets Of Moses



## Synopsis

In the old crenellated church of Mary of Zion in Aksum, Ethiopia, an object is kept that emperors, patriarchs, and priests have assured the world is the most important religious relic of all time: the Ark of the Covenant. Are the legends true? Or is this story a monumental deception? In a triumph of historical detective work the acclaimed Ethiopia expert Stuart Munro-Hay traces the extraordinary legend of Ethiopia's Ark through ancient texts, local stories, from the Bible and from the writings of sixteenth and seventeenth century Jesuits up to modern times, before he reaches his conclusion. The Quest for the Ark of the Covenant settles the mystery of the Ark in Aksum once and for all.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This sometimes fascinating, sometimes pedantic historical detective story, a follow-up to *The Ark of the Covenant*, grows out of Ethiopian traditions holding that the ark, the wooden box containing the tablets of Moses, was brought there in Solomonic times as a result of Solomon's marriage to the queen of Sheba. By the 16th century, the Church of Mary of Zion in Askum claimed to possess the ark. Acting as something of a modern-day Indiana Jones, Munro-Hay, who died as the book was going to press, delves into the documents that keep these legends alive. He discovers that the Kebra Nagast, the main book containing legends of the ark, provides more details about an altar stone than about a wooden box. The stone, likely a replica of the original tablets of Moses, served Ethiopian Christians as a connection to the ark. Munro-Hay concludes that the church at Askum never possessed the ark but rather the altar stone. Munro-Hay offers a charming glimpse into the Ethiopian side of this story, although his conclusions about the ark's legendary status echo those of

generations of biblical scholars who have searched for the biblical relic. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

The Spectator, 16th April 2005. Review by Phillip Ziegler: 'The subject is fascinating... and the setting as exotic as could be asked for. This book is to be commended to anyone interested in Ethiopia, biblical history or the process of scholarly investigation.' 'Munro-Hay is to be congratulated in producing a well-disciplined piece of deeply researched scholarship.' - Minerva

In very good condition. Thank you.

I read Dr. Munro-Hay's last book, "The Quest for the ARK OF THE COVENANT" after learning about it referenced by another book. I had read his other work, "Aksum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity" some time ago and had marveled at his data collection skills. In the "Quest for the ARK OF THE COVENANT" it seemed he has strayed from his forte, which is data collection, and ventured into territories for which he is less crafted: deductive conclusion. It seems the author was bruised by Mr. Hancock's book, "The Sign and the Seal," more so by the book's conclusion that the Ark resides in Aksum and by the reputation it gained, which seemed to have motivated Mr. Stuart Munro-Hay to write this book. The book is replete with self-serving hypotheses, speculations, surmises built on no firm grounds and logical contradiction. Mr. Munro-Hay's motive-induced irritation perhaps by imaginations of the presence of the holiest artifact in a black nation can easily be spotted through the cracks of his intellectual limitations. There hardly is a page in the book that bears unbiased, left-to-the-discretion-of-the-reader data to talk about. Apparently, Mr. Munro-Hay died before concluding the book, and it is possible his work has been tampered with by peers around him with motives other than scholarship. If that is the case, these unknowns have done great disservice to the author by trying to pass a book of surmises as one of scholarship. This book also places Ethiopianists at credibility risk.

It was great to find my last name in the book, especially Debra Maqueda my wife First and Last name; amazing

For the serious scholar of Ethiopia and medieval African texts, this book is essential. The title of this book is unfortunate in that regard. Billed as something populist (for the Ark of the Covenant obsessed), it is actually something much more. It would have been better titled something like

"Twenty Centures of Primary Sources related to the Ethiopian Text Kebra Nagast (The Glory of the Kings)." The late Munro-Hay has done something extraordinary for scholars, he has put together a library of primary sources, many of them never before translated into English, never cited in books about Ethiopia, or never checked in the original. I am in awe of the archival work he has done. Many scholars without access to archives in Portugal, Spain, Italy, England, or Ethiopia will be very grateful to Munro-Hay's exhaustive list of African, Middle Eastern, and European texts that discuss the Kebra Nagast. He uses these to make an incredibly well-thought out argument about the actual dates of the Kebra Nagast and the many stories it contains. Although he concludes that the ark of the covenant was not in Aksum, he provides so many of the primary sources that others inclined otherwise can use his own work to argue with him. Perhaps most important, he does support very early datings of versions of the Kebra Nagast, in particular a very early date for the first versions of stories about the encounter between Solomon and Sheba resulting in a child that became the beginning of an Ethiopian dynasty. Although the book has a slightly rushed-into-print feel (the sources are not always as fully documented in the text the first time they appear) this is a small flaw in what is really a towering achievement.

The late Stuart Munro-Hay was the world's foremost Aksum historian and arguably the world's most knowledgeable scholar on anything related to the so-called Ark of the Covenant. His work leaves in the dust all the popular works by such pseudo-scholars as Laurence Gardner (who once applied to work as Munro-Hay's research assistant and was turned down for lack of credentials). The work covers much more than just Ark history, digging deep into Ethiopia's past, and as such is highly recommended for anyone in Ethiopian studies.

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