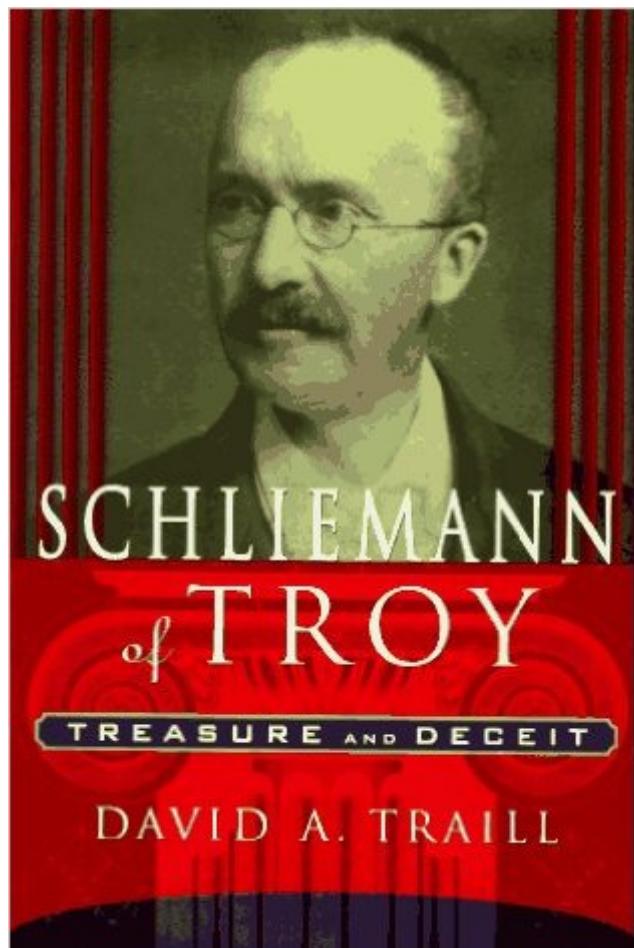


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Schliemann Of Troy: Treasure And Deceit



Synopsis

Using correspondence and diary entries, the author recounts the personal and professional life of the archaeologist and exposes an unscrupulous individual who distorted facts and made false claims about some of his discoveries.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This biography proposes an alternate characterization for one of history's most prominent scholars. Heinrich Schliemann, the father of modern archaeology, excavated the ancient lost city of Troy, unearthed Priam's Treasure and at Mycenae, the legendary mask of Agamemnon. He definitely has become a legend of sorts. However, his recent leap into the public eye deals with his demythification. Apparently, though intelligent, he was also a cheat, a fraud, reckless, had a disregard for laws, was manipulative, a social climber and pathological liar--no small accusation! David A. Trail convinces the reader with this new book that Schliemann was not exactly on the high end of the morality scale. In lieu of confining the book to, for the most part, "just the facts", rather than reading like a novel or story Schliemann of Troy appears as a really long essay, primarily comparing and contrasting the evidence condemning the archaeologist. This is not to say, however, that this book is boring. It is far from that actually. There is however, way too much information for anyone who does not have at least a slight inclination towards the study of classics or archaeology. It contains the unique features of an in-depth essay complete with a lengthy bibliography, index and source reference. It also contains illustrations of maps, sketches of artifacts and photographs of important people places and things. I found that parts of the book, particularly the descriptions of the

sites, were bogged down by too much detail and kind of lost me. Even though there were occasional humorous anecdotes interspersed throughout, and as amusing as it is to see an unfortunate getting his reputation torn to shreds, I don't think I would ever recommend this book as one for entertainment purposes.

David Traill investigates the Schliemann biographies (largely based unquestioningly upon Schliemann's own writings and statements) and finds that most of Schliemann's story is fiction. In the process, Traill reveals Schliemann to be an enigmatic figure as bizarre as any fictional character. Phenomenally ambitious and extremely intelligent, he was also completely unscrupulous when it came to getting what he wanted. In his pursuit of fame, Schliemann reinvented himself a number of times, from country to country (he spoke several foreign languages with complete fluency and perfect pronunciation), business to business, marriage to marriage. Through his business dealings he became wealthy enough to devote all his time to his archeological interests. Archeology was a young science then and Schliemann was not a professional. The way Traill paints Schliemann, we are fortunate that the bulldozer had not been invented then. In his zeal to excavate Homer's Troy, he virtually demolished it. Traill builds a convincing case that Schliemann "salted" his diggings with fake artifacts both at Troy and Mycenae. The "Mask of Agamemnon" is probably a fake. The story of the marriage to the final Mrs. Schliemann is a fascinating one in itself. He virtually bought her from her parents in an arranged marriage when he was over 40 years of age. He molded her into the wife he wanted, forcing her to study night and day to become as fluent in languages as he was, converting a naïve girl into his helpmate and intellectual companion as well as his fellow archeologist. Traill probably goes overboard in his zeal to discredit Schliemann. He wants to make his case so strongly that he goes for overkill. There were times when I wanted to say to the author, "Yes, he was an S.O.B., but you said that already!"

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