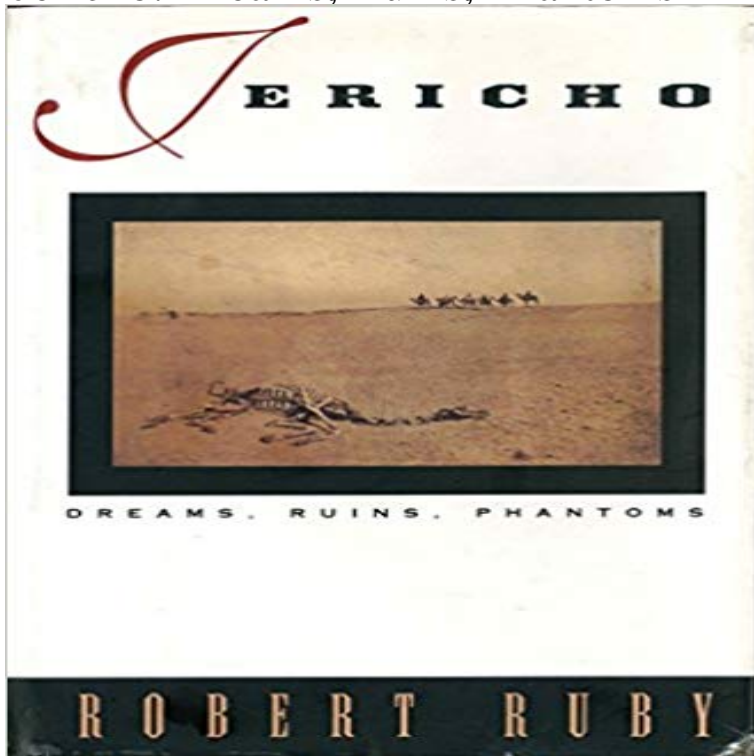


Jericho: Dreams, Ruins, Phantoms



It is a place both mythic and all too real, a place thought to be the site of one of our oldest human settlements and known to be a center of ancient cultures and annihilating conflicts. It sits at the bottom of a malarial valley, the lowest place on the surface of the earth--the overheated, earthen basement of the world, as Robert Ruby describes it. And yet, long before the world's modern religions began scrapping over its bones, Jericho was home to waves of colonization and floods of destruction. Fought over by the succeeding epochs of ancestors, the place we call Jericho is as old as the first remnants dated at 9,000 B.C.--and as current as the daily headlines. In this unorthodox biography of the first eleven thousand years in the life of a legend, Robert Ruby takes us back through time to those early settlements, then forward to the often crude but ultimately successful latter-day attempts to locate Jericho, to unearth and map and catalog its history. Beginning with the geography of place, he weaves together his own intimate knowledge of modern-day Jericho with stories of the lives and work of those explorers and archaeologists of the past whose courage often bordered on madness and whose dedication sometimes seemed the purest kind of human folly. Soldiers, scholars, engineers, adventurers--dilettantes and professionals alike, they were all dreamers drawn to this parched and dusty spot where so much of human history took place. Matching biblical accounts to archaeological evidence, sifting myth from science, phantoms from reality, Robert Ruby teases out the complex strata of the past, helping us to make sense of what exists today. With the flair of a novelist and the enthusiasm of an amateur archaeologist, he offers a tale that is part detection, part epic adventure. Above all, he gives us a work of great literary panache: witty, fact-filled, and utterly, subversively compelling.

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