



Lawrence: Warrior and Scholar

Bruce Leigh

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More than one hundred books have been written about T.E. Lawrence which explore the man and his deeds. Just about every aspect and the many incarnations of his life, his campaigns, the geo-politics of the Arab world, and the influence of the West in it, as Lawrence experienced them, have been examined.

However, nobody has gone in search of the mind of the man himself – of his formation and his deep beliefs. Nobody has asked the question, What, really, is the source of the extraordinary power of this little man? – not only in terms of his incontestable qualities of leadership, but also in regard to the sheer range of his activities and accomplishments.

Archaeologist, writer, guerilla warfare theorist and practitioner, diplomat, soldier and airman, Lawrence also possessed an unusual ability to cross boundaries of class, race, culture, and religion. On top of this, he demonstrated the ability to walk away from power and wealth and the accumulation of things – to change his name more than once; to begin again at the bottom of the heap in the RAF, and stay there, with only a few friends and books and a motorcycle.

Lawrence – Warrior and Scholar is a quest. It examines how a slight Oxford academic combined two of the most challenging paths a man can choose. What drove and motivated this man? How was it that he could apparently out-shoot, out-ride, and out-starve the Bedouin? How is it that the US military, and others, are still studying his famous account of the Arab Revolt and his ‘27 Articles’?

Drawing upon what Lawrence and those who knew him wrote, and did, and said, Bruce Leigh delves into Lawrence’s personal philosophy and practices, examining and analyzing his library, and his close relationship to the world of classical scholarship and chivalry, emphasizing that Lawrence’s views were not abstractions only, but intimately tied to his actions and deeds.

Ultimately, the book argues that there is a message in Lawrence’s writings and activities – one that is against the grain of the world of self-definition by consumption. As one of his friends wrote: ‘The Man was great, the message is greater.’

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