

The Rozabal Line

Shawn Haigins

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To visit the tomb of Jesus skip Jerusalem and catch a plane to Srinagar Kashmir. Anyone in town can give directions to the Roza Bal shrine. That crypt's occupant preached a Buddhism-influenced Christianesque doctrine under the name Yuz Asaf (which means "son of Joseph"). *The Rozabal Line* sprints ahead with this claim as an intelligent but awkwardly assembled historical thriller built around dangerous secrets falling in the same sub-genre as Dan Brown's *DaVinci Code*.

Perhaps "Jesus Christ had not died on the cross after all" but was drugged revived and spirited to safety. If it is proven that he like St. Thomas the Doubter lived for decades in India that news could topple the church hierarchy. No one in the story is sitting back and waiting to see how it plays out. A Vatican sect the "Crux Decussata Permuta"; militant Muslim agents reporting to a Bin Laden associate known only as The Sheikh; and even the shadowy Illuminati race to shape the world's beliefs and advance their pointed agendas. A femme fatale named Swakilki disposes of male seekers casually as if they're squares of toilet paper.

Fictional players are successfully conflated with actual events enhancing the plot. Fanciful speculation is given greater currency by a raft of endnotes citing scholarly papers and mainstream sources. The author has a definite flair for comparisons and delights in the use of anagrams to obscure identities or explain covert affiliations. That includes his own name which is a recombination of the letters in "Shawn Haigins." The reason for the pseudonym is left to the imagination.

This book is so prolifically decorated with side trips descriptive detail and the search for cross-tradition commonality that the story suffers an impeded flow; cohesion is perforated by alternating bursts of narrative action and myth-building. The setting often jumps eons to extend a point and to show incarnations of those karmically linked to one another. The primary setting in the near-future of 2012 is less than rosy and stability isn't increased by the actions of America's first female President. That year is marked by coordinated monthly terrorist incidents in various countries. The first century AD churns with the unconventional rites of fertility cults with dissenting Gnostics and Essenes who preserve apocryphal gospels in buried jars.

The diffusion of page-time among multiple characters relieves any one of them the burden of being the complete hero. Hidden links between opposed organizations are revealed quite gradually and so are the principals' true goals. Countless runners converge at a bombshell revelation. Indeed Haigins' ideologically provocative outcome is every bit earned but shreds of the whole picture make less sense when presented individually. Armchair philosophers conspiracy believers and fans of Mary Magdalene tales will find *The Rozabal Line* to be worthy of examination. The author points to a real subject ripe for further investigation and comes down firmly against antagonism between major religions which may be more closely related than anyone reckoned before.

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