

## **Indiana Jones in South Africa or a rebirth of King Arthur**

**Научный руководитель – Мельникова Надежда Владимировна**

*Гнивецкая Виктория Геннадьевна*

*Студент (бакалавр)*

Московский государственный университет имени М.В.Ломоносова, Москва, Россия

*E-mail: Vikagnitetskaya@icloud.com*

The Indiana Jones franchise is a modern interpretation of the Arthurian legend, adapted for the cinematic landscape of the 20th century. The project, which began in 1973 with George Lucas's initial draft of "The Adventures of Indiana Smith," was envisioned as a contemporary version of the film series of the 1930s and 1940s. Lucas discussed the concept with director Philip Kaufman, who proposed the Ark of the Covenant as the central artifact (the MacGuffin). However, the project was shelved when Kaufman left to work with Clint Eastwood. The turning point occurred in May 1977 on Maui Island, where Lucas presented the story to Steven Spielberg. Spielberg was looking for a chance to make a James Bond-style film, but Lucas's idea captivated him more. He described it as a "Bond film without special effects" and suggested changing the character's surname from Smith to Jones. Soon after, they secured a deal with Paramount Pictures for five films.

The first installment, "Raiders of the Lost Ark," released in 1981, was a resounding success, establishing the iconic image of the archaeologist portrayed by Harrison Ford. It was followed by "Temple of Doom" (1984) and "The Last Crusade" (1989), and the final film produced by Paramount, "The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull," was released in 2008. In 2012, Disney acquired the rights to the franchise, and in 2023, the fifth and final film, "The Wheel of Destiny," directed by James Mangold, was released. This is the only film where Spielberg did not direct and Lucas did not write the script, although both served as producers. The enduring appeal of this long-running franchise lies in the timelessness of the archetypes of "the king" and "the sacred quest," seamlessly transitioning from medieval epics to the realm of archaeological adventure.

As Longenecker suggests [1], the Indiana Jones trilogy can be seen as a well-crafted allegory of the path of moral development, mirroring the spiritual development of humanity. The first installment, The Temple of Doom (1984), begins with the hero facing a profound crisis. In a key dialogue, Jones reveals his motivation, answering the question about his quest's purpose with a phrase with the words "For wealth and glory," revealing his self-centeredness. The Tuggah cult, with its bloodthirsty nature, mirrors Indiana's own greed, but his transformation through sacrifice is evident in the rescue of children and the recovery of the Shivaling Stone. In the second film, Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981), Indiana's journey takes a turn, as paganism gives way to Judaism. The hero encounters the power of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not as a believer but as a witness to divine justice against the Nazis. The third installment, The Last Crusade (1989), takes the story into the realm of the New Testament, serving as a direct adaptation of the quest for the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail is a revered Christian relic, though it is not mentioned in the New Testament itself. The story of the Cup that forgives sins began in the Middle Ages, and books based on this theme became bestsellers in the 12th century. According to the legend, the Savior drank from this cup at the Last Supper, and Joseph of Arimathea collected the blood of the crucified Messiah into it. It is believed that Joseph left Palestine, stopped in Malta, and arrived in the land of the Gauls, where Bishop Philip sent him to Britain. Until the 16th century, there was debate about whether the Grail was a cup or a plate. However, in Wolfram von Eschenbach's novel "Parzival," the Grail is described as a unique type of stone, lapsit exillis, which is similar to the Irish Stone of Destiny. In the movie,

Indiana becomes a true knight, humbly kneeling, listening to the Word of God, and choosing the cup of salvation by casting aside his pride. In the film «Kingdom of the Crystal Skull» (2008), the journey continues, evolving into the pursuit of mystical knowledge.

In the early 20th century, this region was a meeting point of Dutch and British influence, a site of the Boer Wars and the diamond rush. There are explicit references to this in the expanded universe: in 1930, Jones assisted British intelligence on a train passing through South Africa. Here, Jones's Western individualism clashes with the philosophy of «Ubuntu» («I am because we are»). [2.3.]

The image of the «sleeping king» is deeply ingrained in South African culture through the practice of ancestor worship (amadlothi in Zulu). The symbolism of the South African flag, with its six colors (red, white, and blue representing the colonial past, and black, yellow, and green representing the indigenous population), sets the stage for the story as a prophecy. The shaman interprets these colors as stages of the journey: ancestral blood, people, earth, gold, sky, and peace. As Indiana searches for the «Heart of Unkulunkulu», he realizes that the stone belongs to everyone — the living, the dead, and the unborn. As a bridge between the world of European science and the world of African faith, he leaves the artifact in a sacred place, witnessing the birth of a new myth of the «Rainbow Nation».

The story of King Arthur's miraculous reappearance is rooted in medieval chronicles dating back to the 9th to 12th centuries. Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his "History of the Kings of Britain," linked Arthur with the mystical island of Avalon, where he was taken after being fatally wounded. The idea of his eventual return first emerged in 1125, when William of Malmesbury wrote, "Arthur's tomb is nowhere to be found... he will return." This belief was later reinforced by Heriman of Tours around 1145, reflecting a widespread expectation that Arthur would one day rise from his slumber to save his people.

The journey of Indiana Jones echoes Arthur's initiation. For Arthur, the proof of his right to rule was drawing the sword from the stone — a task that required purity of heart. In the modern world, Indiana's "Excalibur" is his whip, representing skill and nobility. His fedora serves as a crown, and his erudition — knowledge of ancient languages and history — becomes the direct equivalent of the "right to power," a wisdom beyond the reach of the greedy Nazis and the French archaeologist Belloc. In the climactic scene of "Raiders of the Lost Ark," Indiana demonstrates true humility before a higher power. He forgoes the pride of omniscience and orders Marion to close her eyes as the Ark is opened, thereby surviving and proving himself worthy of preserving the sacred relic.

According to historical records, Arthur, who was mortally wounded, did not die, but fell asleep on the island of Avalon, in order to awaken one day in his hour of greatest need. In the movie "The Wheel of Fate" (2023), Arthur's story reaches its climax. Indiana, like a sleeping king, is ready to respond to the call. The Nazis are trying to change the course of history, and the hero is forced to take up arms again to defend the truth.

In later films, the transmission of heritage becomes an important theme. Helena, Indiana's goddaughter, accepts his hat, becoming the guardian of his legacy, and Indiana becomes an immortal symbol of culture.

The story of King Arthur is a universal plot that finds its embodiment in the image of an American professor of archaeology of the 20th century. Indiana Jones has become a modern knight whose Camelot is universities and ancient ruins.

In this context, "South Africa" is a metaphor for any place on earth where an old myth finds new life. Having proved that myths can take many forms but always come back, the franchise created by Lucas and Spielberg reminds us of honor, knowledge, and the saving power of humility in the face of mystery.

## Источники и литература

- 1) Longenecker, D. The Theological Theory of Indiana Jones [Electronic resource] / D. Longenecker // The Imaginative Conservative. - 03.01.2016. - Mode of access: <https://theimaginativeconservative.org/2016/01/theological-theory-indiana-jones-dwight-longenecker.html> (accessed: 28.02.2026).
- 2) Indiana Jones Timeline Media [Electronic resource] // Geek to Geek Media. - Mode of access: <https://geektogeekmedia.com/geekery/tv-film/indiana-jones-timeline-media/> (accessed: 01.03.2026).
- 3) Hofmeyr, B. (2025). Reading Ubuntu relationality through a Levinasian lens. Acta Academica: Critical Views on Society, Culture and Politics, \*57\* (1), 53-71. <https://doi.org/10.38140/aa.v57i1.9072> (accessed: 01.03.2026)
- 4) Rinzler, J. W. The Complete Making of Indiana Jones : The Definitive Story Behind All Four Films / J. W. Rinzler. – London : Ebury Press, 2008. – 304 p.
- 5) Campbell, J. The Hero with a Thousand Faces / Joseph Campbell ; translated from English by O. Yu. Chekchurina. – Moscow : AST, 2021. – 352 p.
- 6) Malory, T. The Death of Arthur = Le Morte d'Arthur / Thomas Malory ; translated from English by I. M. Bernstein. – Moscow : Nauka, 1974. – 899 p.
- 7) White, T. H. The Once and Future King / Terence Hanbury White ; translated from English by A. Livergant [et al.]. – Moscow : Eksmo, 2022. – 896 p.
- 8) The New Arthurian Encyclopedia / edited by Norris J. Lacy. – New York : Garland Publishing, 1996. – 615 p.
- 9) Sullivan, J. P. The Archaeology of the Holy Grail : Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade / J. P. Sullivan // Classical and Modern Literature. – 1990. – Vol. 10, No. 3. – P. 269-278.