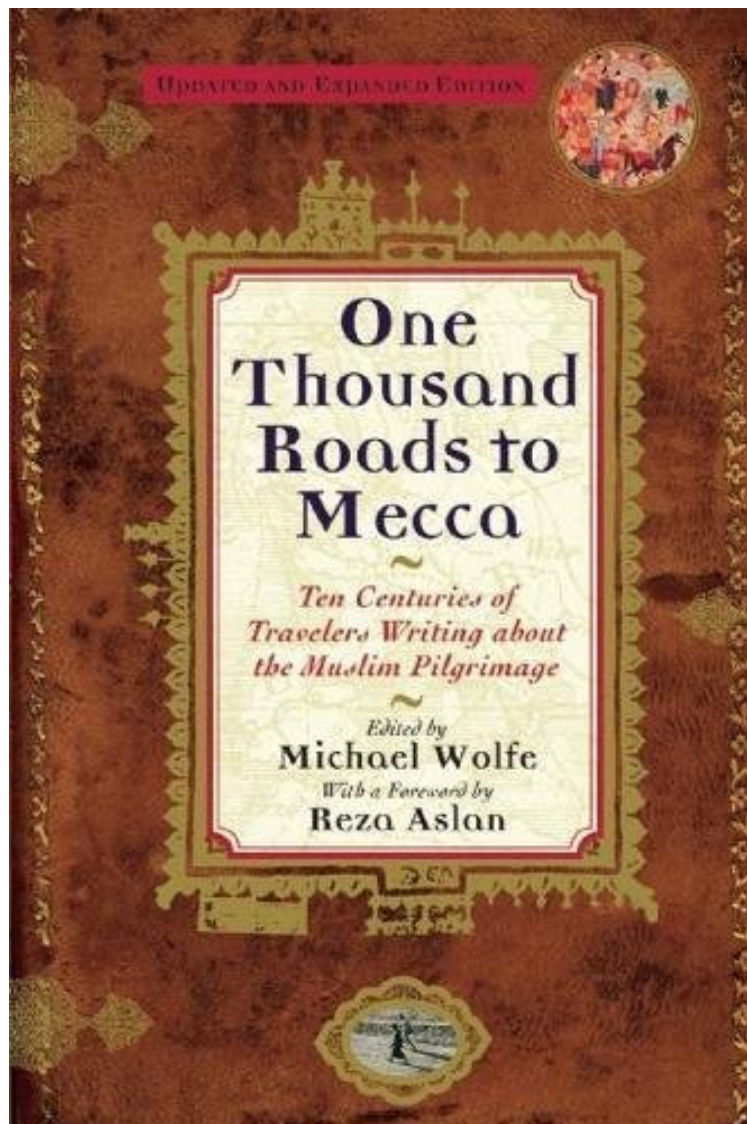


[Library ebook] One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage

## One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing about the Muslim Pilgrimage

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Since its inception in the seventh century, the pilgrimage to Mecca, or the Hajj, has been the central theme in a large body of Islamic travel literature. Beginning with the European Renaissance, it has also been the subject for a handful of adventurous writers from the West who, through conversion or connivance, managed to slip inside the walls of a city forbidden to non-Muslims. *One Thousand Roads to Mecca* collects significant works by observant travel writers from the East and West over the last ten centuries. The two very different literary traditions form distinct sides of a spirited conversation in which Mecca is the common destination and Islam the common subject of inquiry. Excerpted works include travel narratives by Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Battuta, J. L. Burckhardt, Richard Burton, the Begum of Bhopal, John Keene, Winifred Stegar, Muhammad Asad, Harry St. John Philby, Lady Evelyn Cobbold, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Malcolm X, and Michael Wolfe.

.com A journey to Mecca, the Hajj, is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, an undertaking that every Muslim should attempt at least once in his or her life. By leaving their homes and possessions and taking to the road to travel to the birthplace of Islam, Muslims are reminded that all humans are equal before God. It's no wonder, then, that the Hajj has been a central theme of Islamic travel-writing since the 7th century, A.D. *One Thousand Roads to Mecca* is a collection of more than 20 accounts of the Hajj spanning ten centuries. The writers collected in this anthology reflect the geographic diversity of Islam. These pilgrims come from all over the world: Morocco, India, Persia, England, Italy, and the United States. They travel by boat and camel, on foot and horseback and, most recently, by airplane; many suffered all the hardships and dangers attached to a long pilgrimage of months or even years through deserts and over mountains, across lands populated by brigands and thieves. But along with the hazards are descriptions of Cairo and Damascus at the height of their glory during the medieval period and anecdotes and observations that render the cosmopolitan nature of the pilgrims. In addition to the writings of Muslim pilgrims, there are also several accounts by non-Muslim westerners who, by hook or by crook, gained access to the forbidden city of Mecca and then wrote about it. *One Thousand Roads to Mecca* is both classic travel literature at its best and a wonderful introduction to the tenets and practices of a frequently misunderstood religion. From *Library Journal* An American convert to Islam, Wolfe (*The Hadj: An American's Pilgrimage to Mecca*, LJ 8/93) has collected excerpts from the accounts of two dozen pilgrims to Mecca over a span of 1000 years. Islam is the only world religion that requires its followers, if they are able, to undertake a pilgrimage at least once. Through detachment from his or her environment and travel to the birthplace of Islam, and through the subsuming of race and class during the ceremonies, the Muslim experiences a sense of the unity of all humanity and a sense of religious commonality and personal humility before God. Wolfe does an exemplary job of detailing the ceremonies performed at Mecca and the reasons behind them. The chosen excerpts give readers a sense of how the hajj has changed over time as well as how constant the central ceremonies have remained. Works like this help both the student and the general reader gain a better understanding of this remarkable faith. Highly recommended for academic and large public libraries. ?Robert J. Andrews, Duluth P.L., Minn. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A tradition of Muslim writing aimed at the insiders and out." *The Boston Globe* "Wolfe does an exemplary job of detailing the ceremonies performed at Mecca and the reasons behind them. The chosen excerpts give the readers a sense of how the hajj has changed over time as well as how constant the central ceremonies have remained. Highly recommended." *Library Journal* (starred review) "A first-rate addition to a spiritual library." *Los Angeles Times* "Serves as an excellent introduction to a religion, people, culture, and philosophy." *Santa Cruz Sentinel*