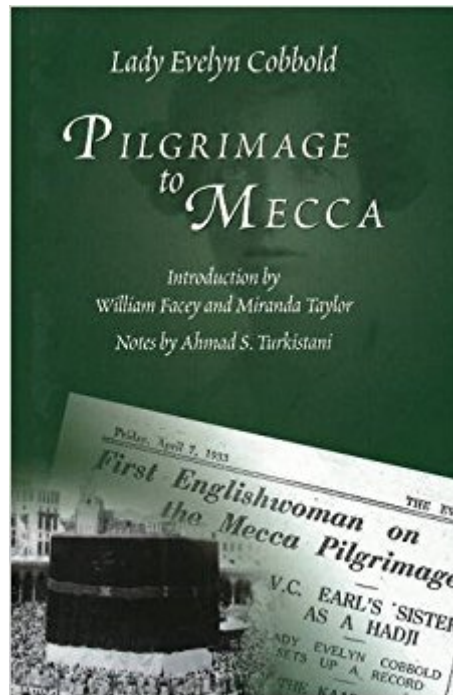




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Pilgrimage To Mecca



Synopsis

As the first British woman convert to Islam on record as making the pilgrimage to Mecca and visiting Medina, Lady Evelyn Cobbold (1867- 1963) cuts a unique figure in the annals of the Muslim Hajj. Anglo-Scottish aristocrat and landowner, Evelyn Murray had spent childhood winters in North Africa. There she had been imbued with the Muslim way of life, becoming, as she puts it, a little Muslim at heart. While travelling widely as an adult in the Arab world, she also maintained a conventional place in society at home, marrying the wealthy John Cobbold in 1891 and devoting herself to her Suffolk and London houses and her Scottish estate, where she became a renowned deer-stalker. Deciding to perform the pilgrimage in 1933, at the age of 66, she stayed with the Philbys in Jeddah while awaiting permission to go to Mecca, and received visits from various dignitaries, notably the King's son the Amir Faysal (later King Faysal). Pilgrimage to Mecca is as much an account of an interior journey of faith as a conventional travelogue. It takes the form of a day-by-day journal interspersed with digressions on the history and merits of Islam. She is the first English writer to give a first-hand description of the life of the women's quarters of the households in which she stayed in Medina, Mecca and Muna - an account remarkable for its sympathy and vividness. Her book was first published in 1934 but has never until now been reprinted. This new edition, with a substantial biographical introduction by William Facey and Miranda Taylor (a great-great-niece of Lady Evelyn), serves to rescue this unique and intriguing Anglo-Muslim from the obscurity that has since befallen her.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The volume is much more than a reprint of the original work, for it includes, under the title *From Mayfair to Mecca: the Life of Lady Evelyn Cobbold*, a most interesting, readable and meticulously annotated introduction (80 pages). *Pilgrimage to Mecca* is a vivid, fresh and charming account in diary form of the author's experiences during her few weeks in the Hejaz. (John Shipman *Asian Affairs*, 2009) This reprint is presented in two parts. The first contains an extensive biographical introduction by William Facey and Miranda Taylor. We then enter the main autobiographical section. This is an appealing book. Its broad framework is the journal of a sophisticated lady, who is drawn to the Muslim faith, and the subsequent physical and emotional journey of the hajj which she performed at the age of 65 in 1933. For those interested in history, travel, biography and religion, this is an illuminating book. (Mona Siddiqui *The Edinburgh Review* 125, 2008) One of the most fascinating of women travellers of the early 20th century. This new edition of *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, with its lengthy biographical introduction and copious footnotes, will become required reading for anyone interested in the history of women travellers, early 20th-century travel in the Middle East, or simply Islamic affairs. (Nick Smith *Geographical Magazine*) More than a reprint of the original edition of *Pilgrimage to Mecca*, (John Murray 1934), this publication is a well-considered and sophisticated repackaging of both author and text. The detail of her story will fascinate readers today [and] this is where Facey and Taylor excel. (Geoffrey Nash *ASTENE Bulletin*, 37, Autumn 2008) This is an unusual and revealing book [recommended] for the positive insight that it gives into the beliefs and culture of Islamic society and for the chance to learn about a remarkable Scottish woman traveller and the different worlds she inhabited. (Elizabeth Sunderland *The Scots Magazine*) London-based Arabian Publishing has rescued [*Pilgrimage to Mecca*] from relative obscurity through publication of a handsome new edition, which includes a lively and illuminating 80-page introduction, *From Mayfair to Makkah*, by William Facey and Miranda Taylor. (Susannah Tarbush *Saudi Gazette*) In the current atmosphere, when there is much debate and controversy regarding what it means to be a Muslim, *Pilgrimage to Mecca* offers a timely opening for new reflection. In delineating Lady Evelyn Cobbold's inimitable and quintessentially English pursuit of Islam, it challenges us to investigate alternatives to the hegemonizing Islamic perspectives and practices. (Humayun Ansari *Bulletin of the Society for Arabian Studies*, 2009) A well-produced, well-documented, and fascinating book. [It] is much more than just a travel narrative, for the publishers have furnished the reader with an 80-page biography of Lady Evelyn Cobbold which is perhaps even more enjoyable and valuable than her account of the Hajj. A deeply moving account of a lady who was fundamentally changed by the Hajj. (Ahmed Weir *Muslim World Book*

Review, 29:2, 2009)

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