



A Shi'ite Pilgrimage to Mecca, 1885-1886: The Safarnâmeh of Mirzâ Mo?ammad ?osayn Farâhâni

Mirzâ Mohammed Hosayn Farâhâni

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Western accounts of the Hajj, the ritual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, are rare, since access to Mecca is forbidden to non-Muslims. In the Muslim world, however, pilgrimage literature is a well-established genre, dating back to the earliest centuries of the Islamic era. *A Shi'ite Pilgrimage to Mecca* is taken from the original nineteenth-century Persian manuscript of the *Safarnâmeh* of Mirzâ Mo'ammad 'osayn Farâhâni, a well-educated, keenly observant, Iranian Shi'ite gentleman.

This memoir holds a wealth of social and economic information about Czarist Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Northern Iran, and Arabia. The author is a meticulous observer, recording details of distances, currencies, accommodations, modes of travel, and so on. He records the experiences encountered by pilgrims of his day: physical hardships, disease, generosity and compassion, banditry, hospitality, comradeship, and exaltation. And, without prejudice, he discusses the tensions between the Shi'ites and the Sunnites in the holy places—tensions that still exist and have erupted in bloody clashes during recent pilgrimages.

A Shi'ite Pilgrimage to Mecca will appeal to a wide audience of general readers, Middle Eastern scholars, anthropologists, and historians.

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