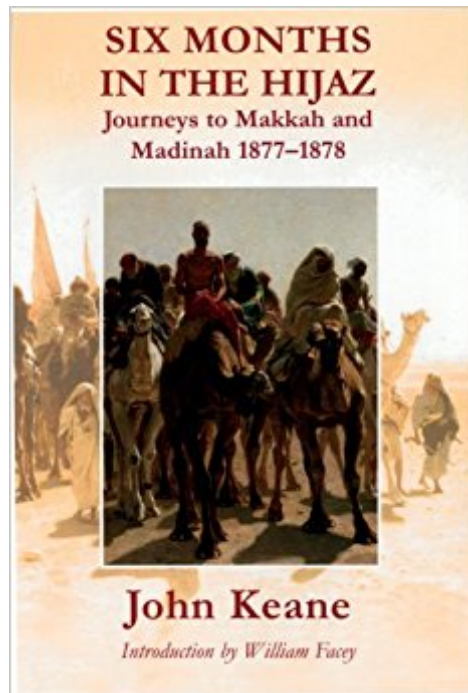




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Six Months In The Hijaz: Journeys To Makkah And Madinah 1877-1878



Synopsis

Stoned in Makkah, knifed on the way to Madinah, Keane witnesses death and suffering in the desert, as he and his fellow-pilgrims are menaced by predatory desert tribes. His account and the mysterious affair of the Lady Venus, who, Keane alleged, was an Englishwoman stranded in Makkah at the time of his visit, created a sensation in England earning him some notoriety and helping to publicise his first two books, *Six Months in Meccah* and *My Journey to Medinah*. These are here republished for the first time since the 1880s. William Facey's Introduction tells the story of Keane's life, provides a critical appraisal of his journey, and places his account of the pilgrimage in the context of other travellers to Islam's holy places. The comprehensive glossary, index and map which accompany this single volume will assist and guide readers as they join Keane on his remarkable journey.

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Customer Reviews

Renowned globally for his creative thinking about democracy, John Keane is Professor of Politics at the University of Sydney and at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB). Among his best-known recent books are *Global Civil Society?* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), *Violence and Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), and the highly-acclaimed *The Life and Death of Democracy* (2009). William Facey - Author of *Saudi Arabia by the First Photographers* and *The Story of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia*. He began his career as a classicist at Oxford and has emerged as a leading historian of the Arabian Peninsula. For many years he has worked as a consultant on museum projects in the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in the archaeology, history and

people of the individual nations. He has also been involved in planning museums and exhibitions in England, Europe, Central America and the Far East.

John Fryer Thomas Keane was a Yorkshire clergyman's son who went to sea at the age of twelve. In 1877, still only 23 but having had his share of adventures, 'Jack' Keane took it upon himself to visit Makkah and Medina. In the 19th Century, the Hijaz was a very different place. Makkah was an exotic, forbidden city as far as Westerners were concerned. In 1877 the only Englishmen who had previously seen Makkah and left behind significant accounts were Joseph Pitts and Sir Richard Burton. Pitts was a sailor who was captured by Barbary Pirates at the age of 17 and sold into slavery. He visited Makkah with his master in 1680. His accounts of the experience are not particularly complimentary, which is not surprising under the circumstances. Burton's travels to Arabia in the mid 19th Century provide the primary account of the period and need no further description. Burton was of course an intellectual - his original goals included anthropological, equestrian and hydrological research - and this is reflected in his writings. Jack Keane, on the other hand, was an 'ordinary sailor'. Although not educated to Burton's standards, he was extraordinarily observant and thoughtful. He describes everything in detail, be it the lamp fittings in the Holy Haram or the boils on his neck. Not given to flowery prose, he tells things plainly as he saw them. Some of Keane's experiences are quite extraordinary. In Makkah he witnesses a great flood and the strange sight of pilgrims swimming around the Holy Kabba. He is denounced as a suspected Christian by schoolchildren (who later get their comeuppance at the end of a teacher's cane) and is stabbed during his pilgrimage to Medina. Most surprisingly of all, he discovers a supposedly British lady living alone in the middle of Makkah (in 1877!). Exactly who she was and how she got there is not entirely certain to this day. This would make an interesting research project for anyone brave enough to undertake it. Keane was subject to the cultural prejudices of his time and has some remarks to make about ethnicity that would not be tolerated from a modern writer; yet when he speaks from personal experience instead of parroting received Victorian opinion, he more often than not expresses admiration and respect for the people whom he meets. On his return to England, Keane published two books about his visit to the Hijaz. These were *Six Months in Meccah* (note the transliteration of tah-marbuta) and *My Journey to Medinah*.

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