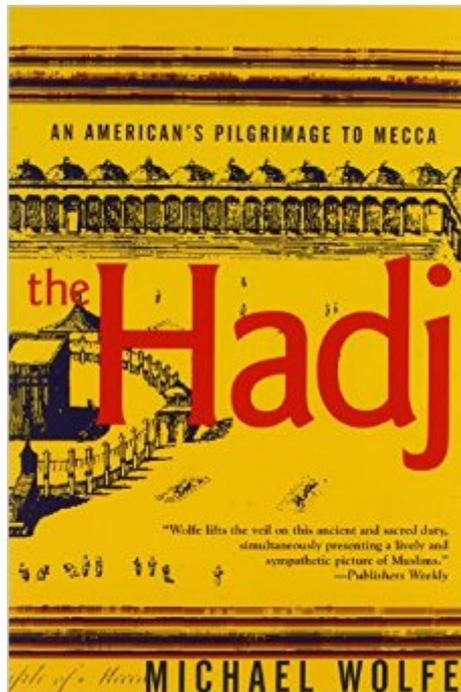


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# The Hadj: An American's Pilgrimage To Mecca



## Synopsis

The Hadj, or sacred journey, is the pilgrimage to the house of God at Mecca that all Muslims are asked to make once in their lifetimes. One of the world's longest-lived religious rites, having continued without break for fourteen hundred years, it is, like all things Islamic, shrouded in mystery for Westerners. In *The Hadj*, Michael Wolfe, an American who converted to Islam, recounts his own journey as a pilgrim, and in doing so brings readers close to the heart of what the pilgrimage means to a member of the religion that claims one-sixth of the world's population. Not since Sir Richard Burton's account of the pilgrimage to Mecca over one hundred years ago has a Western writer described the Hadj in such fascinating detail.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Oh dear, for just one instant a Muslim writer forgot to key his writing to allaying Western concerns about Islam and addressing Western stereotypes, for their noble concerns must frame our every endeavor, so he rightly gets rapped on the hand by the Kirkus Review included above by : "Notable, in these muted polemical digressions, is Wolfe's decision to ignore the most common criticisms of Islam, for its views on violence and on women." "Noted?" Can you imagine a Catholic writer's account of a journey to Rome or a Jewish writer's journey to Jerusalem or a Protestant Christian writer's journey to Bethlehem being taken to task for not addressing their religion's 'views on violence and on women?' Yet each of these religions has problems with violence and women's rights as least as pressing as Islam's. Wolfe does what he set out to do. Aply. Up yours, Kirkus Reviews.

As a recent convert to Islam, I can only imagine what it would feel like to stand in the Great Mosque in Mecca with the hundreds of thousands of other pilgrims. Wolfe had this opportunity, but unfortunately, he did not sufficiently express his religious/spiritual impressions in the book. His writing style was a bit too objective and detached. It appeared that he carried the initial uneasiness he felt in Morocco (i.e. when he was afraid to enter the mosque) throughout the entire trip. However, I do applaud the honesty with which he described his religious upbringing and why he decided to become a Muslim.

A very good account of one of the most important journeys in a Muslim's life. I picked up this hoping it would be a good guide for Muslim converts if not a guide for Hadj. It was neither. Although Wolfe does take a genuine interest in the Arab culture and the religion of Islam, he fails to take the opportunity to enlighten his readers on clearly, one of the world's most misunderstood religion. He does not talk about how to prepare, how to perform, why they do it and what to watch for at the Pilgrimage. Wolfe dwells instead on his personal observations of his tour of Morocco, Mecca and Medina; the book is a personal trip diary. The author has obviously started out by studying a lot into Islam, however, it seems he received his inspirations from unusual sources. He quotes liberally from Frost, Twain and Washington Irving throughout the book but rarely goes into the traditions of the Prophet of Islam. He even summarizes the entire autobiography of the Prophet in 3 paragraphs. Wolfe's admiration for Mohammed (Peace be upon him) is very evident, however; scattered through the book amidst car deals and accounts of his shopping cart are revealing reasons on why he became a Muslim. A short list of the Prophet's words favorite sayings, towards the end, is as refreshing as the cool ZamZam waters of Mecca.

In this book Michael Wolfe, an American convert to Islam has described his personal Hadj to Makkah beautifully. The pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia, that is a principal religious obligation of adult Muslims. He has described the Hadj in steps, ritual by ritual and by giving their meanings, as well as his own thoughts, ideas, emotions..etc at that point in time. His journey starts from Morocco, where he went before Hadj, to gain some knowledge and to live in the Islamic environment. He has given a lot of information about Moroccan people, their life, culture and relationship with each other. He gives a lot of information about Muslim people and their culture in general, such as Brotherhood in Islam for example. Where ever he went he was accepted as one of the family member - a brother. This he says was one of the beautiful things that Islam has gives to

people and which is specific to Muslims only, which Malcolm X has noticed too when he made his own Hadj. I bought this book because I wanted to know, a Westerner's opinion on Islamic topics such as Hadj, from Western perspective. I must say this book was a wonderful read for me, and I am sure it will be the same for you.

So clearly written! I knew Michael Wolfe when we were teenagers. He was already a brilliant poet. He was very deeply longing for knowledge and meaning back then. This is a journey. It continues. For someone who dwells on the negative aspects of religion, he helps me understand some of the reasons people --smart people-- embrace it.

This is a superbly written travelogue. The writer comes across as a gentle, down-to-earth sort, albeit with a keen observation and the ability to paint word images with exquisite economy of prose. It probably owes itself to his background as a poet. I loved the narratives of his stay at Marrakesh, Tangier and Mecca. As a non-Muslim, I was hardly looking for a scholarly exposition on the rites of the Islamic pilgrimage. I was curious to know about the attitudes and sentiments of the people involved, and the hardships of the journey. Wolfe delivers this in spades, laced with humour and wit.

Michael Wolfe has outdone himself in the writing of "The Hadj". He takes you to the streets of Marrakech, Mecca and Medina. The writing style is exquisite. He really gives you insight on what to expect while on the Hadj. I actually felt like I was there, on his journey; so descriptive and such a detailed accounting of his surroundings. I finished the book in less than a week and each time I put it down, I could not wait to pick it up and start reading again. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND this book to everyone!! A real treat!

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