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Adventures in Arabia among the Bedouins, Druses, whirling dervishes, Yezidee devil worshipers

William Seabrook

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William Seabrook : Adventures in Arabia among the Bedouins, Druses, whirling dervishes, Yezidee devil worshipers before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Adventures in Arabia among the Bedouins, Druses, whirling dervishes, Yezidee devil worshipers:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A TRAVELOGUE TREATBy EMAN NEPThe title of this book is very strange. If you were to only look at the cover, you'd see ADVENTURES IN ARABIA, which is not a very unique book-title at all. However, if you turn the pages a few times you get to the real title of this book: ADVENTURES IN ARABIA: AMONG THE BEDOUINS, DRUSES, WHIRLING DERVISHERS, AND YEZIDEE DEVIL WORSHIPPERS. So what could have been mistaken for another generic "book about Arabia" actually turns out to be perhaps one of the best books ever written about some of the religious sects and groups in 1920s Middle East. What impressed me the most about this book is Seabrook's unbiased account of his travels. Although it is apparent that he was very fond of the people in the Middle East, there are a few times where he admits that he is not in total agreement with their views or ways of doing things. His unbiased reporting made his stories all the more fascinating because you knew that when he described something, no matter how unbelievable or remarkable it may be, he was most definitely telling the truth. Although the book is very expensive, it is an extremely well-made hardcover with some excellent photos from Seabrook's travels. There are also some pencil/ink drawings, but strangely enough many of these show places that aren't even mentioned in the book. My only negative on the book is that there is no map (excluding the

"map" on the cover of the book) to show what this region looked like in the 1920s. To prevent spoiling any enjoyment from reading this book, I'll list a few things that I found fascinating that this book addresses: Have you ever wondered how the people in the desert stay clean? Did you know that there is a Berlin-Baghdad Railroad (unfinished at the time of Seabrook's adventures)? Have you ever wondered what the Whirling Dervish ceremony is about? Have you ever wondered what sort of legends and tales they have in the Middle East? Did you know that there are people that actually worship a Christian Satan and acknowledge God? Three things in particular that further led me to trust Seabrook's traveling account: I went to a Whirling Dervish ceremony in Istanbul, Turkey, recently, and it was exactly as he described in the book. Secondly, I convoyed from Baghdad, Iraq to Mosul, Iraq in 2004 and, as Seabrook says, the road to Mosul is full of "grassy foothills". Finally, he mentioned the "cold desert nights", which I can also attest to, as I would often wear everything in Baghdad at 0300 on a cold winter night that I would have worn during a cold winter day in Germany. Small things, yes, but when one can verify data that is 70+ years old, I find it pretty fascinating. If you've ever spent any time in the Middle East, even if it was only "inside the wire" of a base in Iraq, I think you'll find this travelogue extremely entertaining and well-written. In fact, the only thing Seabrook could have done to make it better would have been to include a map charting his travels and maybe a conclusion to wrap up the whole story. Every bit as exciting as the full-length title implies.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By Aaron Ferguson
In the condition it was described as being. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Arabia 1930s
By William Garrison Jr. (from a seller's review): "Adventures in Arabia" by Seabrook. In several sections: Among the Bedouins, Among the Druses, Among the Dervishes, Among the Yezidees. The Yazidi are members of a Kurdish religion with ancient Indo-Iranian roots. They are primarily a Kurdish-speaking people living in the Mosul region of northern Iraq, with additional communities in Transcaucasia, Armenia, Turkey, and Syria in decline since the 1890s - their members emigrating to Europe, especially to Germany. Their religion, Yazidism, is a branch of Yazdnism, and is seen as a highly syncretic complex of local Kurdish beliefs and Islamic Sufi doctrine introduced to the area by Sheikh Adi ibn Musafir in the 12th century. The Yazidi believe in God as creator of the world, which he placed under the care of seven holy beings or angels, the chief of whom is Melek Taus, the Peacock Angel. Seabrook was interested in them because of their reputation as devil worshippers. Actually, the reality is a little more complex. In 1915 Seabrook joined the French Army and served in World War I. He was gassed at Verdun in 1916, and was later awarded the Croix de Guerre. The following year he took up the post of reporter for The New York Times, and soon became an itinerant. Besides his books, Seabrook had articles published in popular magazines including Cosmopolitan, Reader's Digest and Vanity Fair.

Cannibalism: Seabrook went on a trip to West Africa, living with a tribe known as the Guere. He asked the chief what human meat tasted like, but the chief couldn't describe it to Seabrook's satisfaction. Later, Seabrook had the opportunity to try it himself, getting a portion of stew with rice as well as a "sizeable rump steak, also a small loin roast to cook or have cooked" however he wanted. The source, Seabrook stated, was a recently killed man, but he was not murdered. He reported that, "It was like good, fully developed veal, not young, but not yet beef. It was very definitely like that, and it was not like any other meat I had ever tasted. It was so nearly like good, fully developed veal that I think no person with a palate of ordinary, normal sensitiveness could distinguish it from veal. It was mild, good meat with no other sharply defined or highly characteristic taste such as for instance, goat, high game, and pork have. The steak was slightly tougher than prime veal, a little stringy, but not too tough or stringy to be agreeably edible. The roast, from which I cut and ate a central slice, was tender, and in color, texture, smell as well as taste, strengthened my certainty that of all the meats we habitually know, veal is the one meat to which this meat is accurately comparable."

Later life: Around 1920, English occultist Aleister Crowley spent a week with Seabrook at Seabrook's farm. Seabrook went on to write a story based on the experience, and to recount the experiment in *Witchcraft: Its Power in the World Today*. In 1924, he travelled to Arabia and sampled the hospitality of various tribes of Bedouin and the Kurdish Yazidi. His account of his travels, *Adventures in Arabia: among the Bedouins, Druses, Whirling Dervishes and Yezidee Devil Worshipers* was published in 1927; it was sufficiently successful to allow him to travel to Haiti, where he developed an interest in voodoo and the *Culte des Morts* which were described at length in his book *The Magic Island*. Although Seabrook had a lifelong fascination with the occult practices of satanism and voodoo, as he saw firsthand both in third-world countries (documented in his books *The Magic Island* (1929), and *Jungle Ways* (1930)) as well as in London, Paris, and New York, he later concluded that he had seen nothing that did not have rational scientific explanation, a theory that he detailed in *Witchcraft: Its Power in the World Today* (1940). In December 1933, Seabrook was committed at his own request and with the help of some of his friends to Bloomingdale, a mental institution in Westchester County, near New York City for treatment for acute alcoholism. He remained a patient of the institution until the following July and in 1935 published an account of his experience, written as if it were no more than another expedition to a foreign locale. The book, *Asylum*, became another best-seller. In the preface, he was careful to state that his books were not "fiction or embroidery." He married Marjorie Muir Worthington in France in 1935, after they had returned from a trip to Africa, in which Seabrook was researching a book. Due to his alcoholism and sadist practices they divorced in 1941. She later wrote a biography, *The Strange World of Willie Seabrook*, which was published in 1966. Death: He committed suicide on September 20, 1945 in Rhinebeck, New York, by drug

overdose.