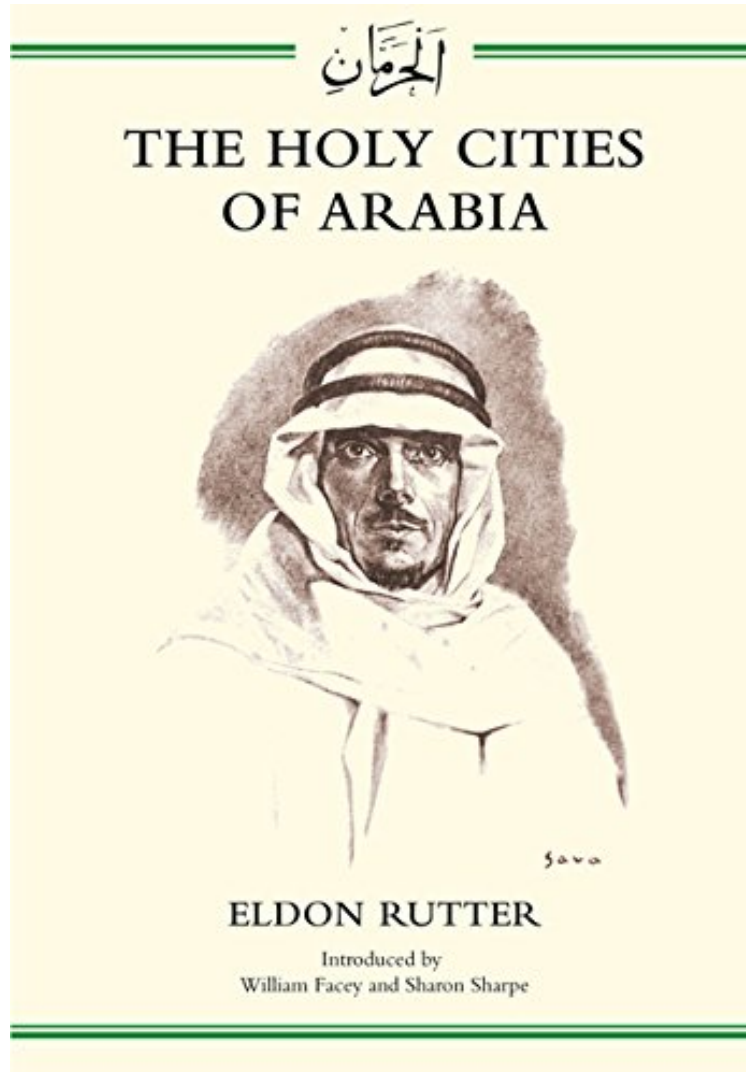


## The Holy Cities of Arabia

*Eldon Rutter*

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**Eldon Rutter : The Holy Cities of Arabia** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Holy Cities of Arabia:

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FEW BRITISH EXPLORERS IN ARABIA have produced books whose importance as travelogues is transcended by their literary quality. One such is The Holy Cities of Arabia, published to critical acclaim in 1928, with its author hailed as a worthy successor to Burckhardt, Burton and Doughty. Unrivalled among works by Western travellers to

Islams holy cities, this account of a pilgrimage to Makkah in 1925<sup>26</sup> is made all the more remarkable by its authors timing. In 1925 Abd al-Aziz Ibn Saud brought to an end centuries of rule over the Hijaz by the Hashimite sharifs and their Ottoman overlords. Rutter, living as a learned Muslim Arab in a Makkan household, had a ringside seat as Riyadh imposed its writ on Islams holy cities. As striking as his account of life in Makkah before modernization are his interviews with Ibn Saud, and his journeys to al-Taif and to the City of the Prophet, al-Madinah. The Holy Cities of Arabia proved to be its authors only full-length work. After a brief career as a Middle East traveller, Rutter lapsed into obscurity. This new edition aims to revive a neglected masterpiece and to establish Rutters reputation. Little was known about him until now and the introduction tells the story of his life for the first time, assessing his talents as a travel writer and analysing his significance as a British convert.

About the Author Born in London in 1894, Rutters first taste of the Muslim world came during the First World War, when he served as a trooper at Gallipoli and in Egypt and Palestine. Having converted to Islam in Malaya, he spent 1924<sup>25</sup> in Egypt preparing for the Hajj, immersing himself in Muslim life, law and history and becoming so fluent in Arabic that he was able to pass himself off as a learned Syrian. His year-long sojourn in Makkah and the Hijaz was longer than that of any previous Western visitor. Soon after the publication of The Holy Cities of Arabia in 1928, he made two more Middle Eastern journeys. After the Second World War he lived a peripatetic life around Europe and was last heard of in 1956. To this day it is not known how, when or where he died.