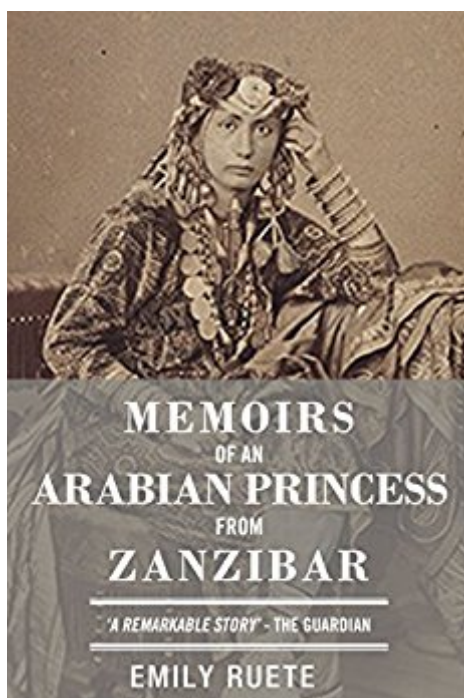


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Memoirs Of An Arabian Princess From Zanzibar



Synopsis

"[A]n intriguing account of court life in an outpost of the Islamic empire in Africa." Journal of World History
In 1844, Salamah bint Saïf d was born into royalty of the sultanate of Zanzibar and Omar. She was the youngest out of Sayyid Said bin Sultan Al-Busaid's thirty children and daughter of a Circassian concubine, and through her early years spent in a variety of great palaces she experienced vast wealth. This is the story of Saïf d's life, written after she had left Zanzibar and eloped with Rudolph Heinrich Ruete to Germany to begin life under her new name, Emily Ruete. From an early age she was witness to the intrigue and politics of the harem, even involving herself at the tender age of fifteen to the factional infighting and an attempted coup by her brother Barghash against another brother. But this is more than merely an interesting story of one Arabian princess's life in East Africa, as Saïf d provides a fascinating insight into the social and cultural history of Zanzibar. She writes on numerous topics from schooling to fashion, medical treatment to slavery, thus giving a vivid impression of when she lived. After she married Rudolph Ruete and converted to Christianity, they spent the rest of their lives in Hamburg. She wrote *Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar* in German in 1886. It was the first known autobiography of an Arabian woman. She died in 1924 in Germany at the age of 79. This edition was translated by Lionel Strachey and published in 1907. Strachey died in 1927.

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Customer Reviews

I found this book to be very interesting in that the Princess tells her story herself and brings the reader into a life not known by many people. She in describes every day life in Zanzibar during the late 1800's and early 1900's and even royalty in those days had it's drama with family members. I found her writing to be a little dry and juvenile at times, but it was nicely written.

this was good for the traveller to zanzibar to get a touch of insight. i have to say, her opinions on the nature of "negro slaves" was quite off-putting, but i had to just remind myself that she was of a different culture and a different time. also, zanzibar was big into the slave trade at the time. ugly history, no doubt. other than that, it was a really interesting insight to what life was like in a place that, if you visit today, you can't even compare to your home. but take it back 100+ years... very interesting...

Because I have recently become involved in a dance troupe involving Middle Eastern, Romani, Persian, etc. costumes, the cover of this memoir immediately caught my eye. The autobiography was much more readable than I expected from something written 150 years ago. Just as in any classic book from long ago, it takes awhile to get used to the rhythm of historical dialogue. Add to that the fact that the author was virtually uneducated, and that the book is written through her eyes in a time that was very different than now, it could have been very hard to read. However, the true story of a woman raised in a harem (with all the political intrigue you might imagine), was instead hard to put down! Her down to earth details of royal Muslim life, like wearing hajib, explanation of Sharia law, experiencing Ramadan, and even her very unpleasant view of black Africans made me wish for more of her outspoken voice. I do admit, the tale begins to drag when she falls in love, moves to Germany, and converts to Christianity, but, she was writing about her life in Zanzibar and so her story had to end. I truly enjoyed reading this unusual memoir of a real Arabian princess and would recommend to fans of women's history in particular.

Interesting account by member of Arab North Africa's aristocracy from the late 1800s. Author provides insight into family life, educational and cultural mores affecting women, traditions and drama surrounding tribal leadership of the time. Well-written, easy read. Recommended.

Whether or not Reute is truly an Arabian princess shouldn't be disputed, as the detailed account of customs, courts, inside secrets, and life as royalty is too accurate to possibly be a lie. The blatant, unapologetic way the authoress describes, and confronts is compelling enough so that one does not want to put the book down until it is finished.

It was okay, but I didn't find it hard to put down and not pick back up.

An amazing first person account of life as a Sultan's favorite daughter during the heyday of Arab superiority in Africa while the slave trade was booming. The latter part of this memoir describes Emily Ruete's plucky readjustment to different times and tricky politics. I recommend this book to anyone visiting 21st Century Zanzibar as I did 10 days ago and saw the World Heritage renovated Sultan's palace. I also recommend "Memoirs" as a good read.

Fascinating and wonderful. Thoroughly enjoyed looking into the world of this author.

Recommended!

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