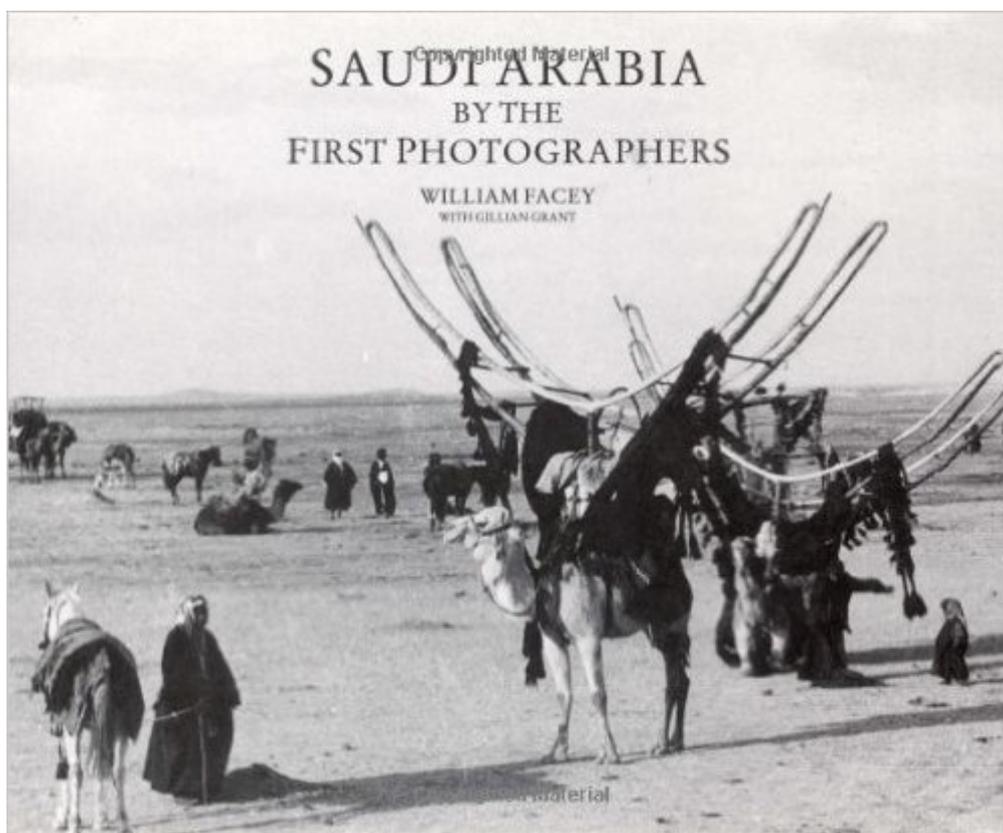


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Saudi Arabia By The First Photographers



Synopsis

The photographs in this book were taken between 1860 and 1950, at a crucial period just before the ancient way of life in the region was swept away. The selection draws on all the known photographic collections, from the earliest travel photographers, through to the 1950s. These remarkable images are accompanied by historian William Facey's excellent text which places them in their historical context, plus detailed commentary on photographic techniques by photographic archivist Gillian Grant.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is an important, unique collection of the earliest photographs taken on the Arabian Peninsula. It includes the earliest known photograph, taken of the city of Madinah, in 1861, by Colonel Muhammad Sadiq of the Egyptian Army. The photos are grouped by geographical sections of the country, and are preceded by two introductory chapters written by William Facey and Gillian Grant (with some duplication in subject matter). They cover both the development of photography itself, as well as those who utilized it in the Peninsula. There is the Islamic prohibition against "graven images," but based on the numerous photographs of people, clearly a lot did not object (as is equally true today). It was reported that Gertrude Bell, during her stay at Hail, was given full liberty to take any photographs she wanted. As mentioned in the introduction, numerous photos are of the "snapshot" variety, lacking proper composition; the result usually of the early circumstances in which they were taken, and this does detract from the overall collection. Still, I found many others worthwhile. In particular, there were the "general views" of cities like Madinah (p 35), Buraydah

(p68), Marat (72-73), Dumat al-Jandal (p88-89), and even an aerial view of the Hasa oasis, taken by Aramco in the `50's (p100). Equally impressive is the Hijaz railroad (p40), Bait Baghdadi, Aramco's first office in Jeddah (p51), a baby camel traveling in a "camel bag" (p 83), gazelles and cheetahs killed during the hunt (p84-85), the Ruwala tribe on the move (p86-87) In my opinion there is little doubt that the finest photographer in the collection was Wilfred Thesiger.

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