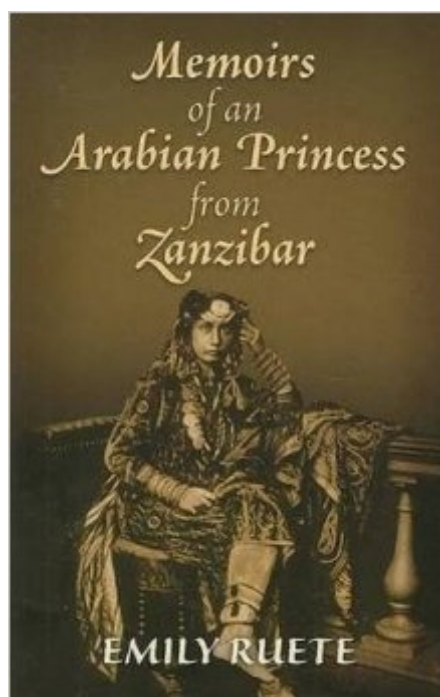


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# Memoirs Of An Arabian Princess From Zanzibar



## Synopsis

Return to an era when Zanzibar was ruled by sultans, and enter a vanished world of harems, slave trading, and court intrigues. In this insider's story, a sultan's daughter who fled her gilded cage offers a compelling look at nineteenth-century Arabic and African royal life. After years of exile in Europe, the former princess wrote this fascinating memoir as a legacy for her children and a warm reminiscence of her island home. Born Salamah bint Said, Princess of Zanzibar, in 1844, author Emily Ruete grew up in a harem with scores of siblings. The royal family maintained its fabulous wealth and luxury with a robust traffic in ivory, spices, and human bondage. Ruete ventures beyond the palace, into the city and plantations where European traders, missionaries, and colonists exercised a growing influence. After her dramatic elopement with a German trader, Ruete attained the perspective to form a comparison of the lives of women in Muslim society with those of their European contemporaries. Originally published in 1886, this remarkable autobiography will captivate readers interested in Zanzibar and Eastern Africa as well as students of Arabic, Islam, and women's studies.Â Â

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Memoirs of an Arabian Princess from Zanzibar" by Emily Ruete (born Sayyida, Princess of Zanzibar) is a unique book, the only autobiography by a Zanzibari princess of the 19th century. The author was born in Zanzibar in the mid-1800's. Long ruled by Omani Arabs, Zanzibar had achieved hegemony on the coast of Eastern Africa and had grown rich on the harvest of slaves and ivory from the continent and spices (especially cloves) from Zanzibar island itself. They had spread their

influence and Swahili language as far west as Kisangani on the Congo river (the setting for V.S. Naipaul's "A Bend in the River"). Times were changing: European traders and missionaries were the harbingers of colonization for the continent, protectorate status for Zanzibar, and the crusade against the Eastern slave trade. Sayyida eloped with a German and had to leave Zanzibar. She moved to Germany where she was eventually widowed and alone (her Islamic family in Zanzibar rejected her for marrying a European Christian.) She wrote this book for her children, to provide them a record of her history. In it she describes life in the Zanzibar royal palace and plantations: traditions, customs, palace intrigues and overthrows, the harem, slaves, festivals, manners, the status of women, and so forth. She compares her life in Europe to her life in Zanzibar. This book should be of value to anyone interested in Zanzibar or Eastern Africa, or Arab, Islamic, or Women's studies. Please see my other reviews of books about Africa.

This book contains the memoirs of Emily (Sayyida) Ruete, a Nineteenth Century Arabian princess. It is a fascinating tale of childhood and living conditions within the harem in Nineteenth Century Zanzibar. The book is unique in that Sayyida was one of the very few princesses who learned to write, hence other princesses were not able to record their experiences. It is refreshing to read an insider's report of harem life rather than the strange misinterpretations of short-term foreign visitors. The book also contains firsthand accounts of political intrigue, which will be of interest to students of Zanzibari or Omani history.

This book is written by Emily Ruete (formerly, Syiida Salma) who was the daughter of the most influential rulers of Oman and Zanzibar of all times. It was originally written in German and then translated into English and Arabic. This book is excellent for the kind of readers who are fascinated by history and, Arab and Islam culture. Although the title suggests the author's autobiography, the book goes further to give a clear image on the political aspects and social life of the island of Zanzibar. I am glad that she had some financial hardships that forced her to write such a book to sell it. It has delivered so much information about Zanzibar that we wouldn't know.

I initially read several extracts from this book when I visited the Sultans' palace in Zanzibar Stone Town where the Princess used to live. I was fascinated by the day-to-day details in this book which really gave you an indepth look into how a Muslim Princess lived during that time. A great book for history lovers, world travelers and anyone who happens to be heading to Zanzibar (don't forget Mr Metou!).

I use to leave in Ruete's palace in Zanzibar and reading her story was amazing for me. If you ever plan to visit the island of Zanzibar you can't miss this book.

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...

This book has been examined by historians and is considered to be the authentic memoirs of a beloved daughter of the then ruling Sultan. It is truly a study in the contrasts of living in the very prosperous and warm climate of Zanzibar, and then voluntarily leaves when she falls in love with a German merchant. She is secretly assisted in leaving her beloved country and ultimately is married and moves to the much harsher and less prosperous country of Germany. In her memoirs the princess compares the religious practices of Islam and Christianity, which she adopts in order to be married to a Christian.. She shortly gives birth to three children which allows her to compare the educational differences in the manner and environment in which children are taught, as well as to how the climate and environments in which her children are schooled affects their health status. Of primary importance to the Princess are her efforts to dispel the myths she believes that Europeans believe concerning the differences between polygamy and so called monogamous relationships, and the ease and difficulty women are afforded a divorce in the event the marriage is unhappy by the parties involved. Finally at the conclusion of her memoir the princess discovers that political scheming and intrigue for the purposes of power, control, and wealth are found in both societies. It is a well written book and affords the Western mentality of today some new and interesting insights into the mind of an Islamic woman of her time, and perhaps equally pertinent into the thoughts of some middle eastern women of today. Definitely something to think about.

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.

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