



## Sojourner in Islamic Lands

*Russell Fraser*

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## **Sojourner in Islamic Lands** Russell Fraser

Sojourner in Islamic Lands takes us on a journey from Kazakhstan in the far north of Central Asia, across the mountains to the former Soviet Union, then south to Iran just below the Caspian Sea. Russell Fraser follows the ancient Silk Road wherever possible. For centuries the Silk Road was the primary commercial link between Europe and Asia, with much of it over desert sands and accessible only by camel. Building on history and personal experience, Fraser's narrative describes this vast territory with an eye to geography, artistic culture, and religion over more than two thousand years.

The book that he gives us depends first of all on travel, but the author's eye is on an interior landscape, and he focuses on the influence of religious ideology on the cultural landscape of Central Asia. Delving deeply into art and architecture, he takes them to be Islam's most significant creative expressions. Although Islam is currently the predominant religion in the region, the book also examines the two other belief systems with modern-day followers—Christianity and an antireligious sect Fraser calls secular progressivism.

His aim is to present Islam to Western readers by describing its achievements during the High Middle Ages and comparing and contrasting them with those of modern Islam. The book offers insights into the history of a major world religion through the eyes of a well-known literary scholar on a journey through exotic parts of the world. He steeps us in the latter, inviting the reader to share the journey with him and participate in the sensations it gives rise to.

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