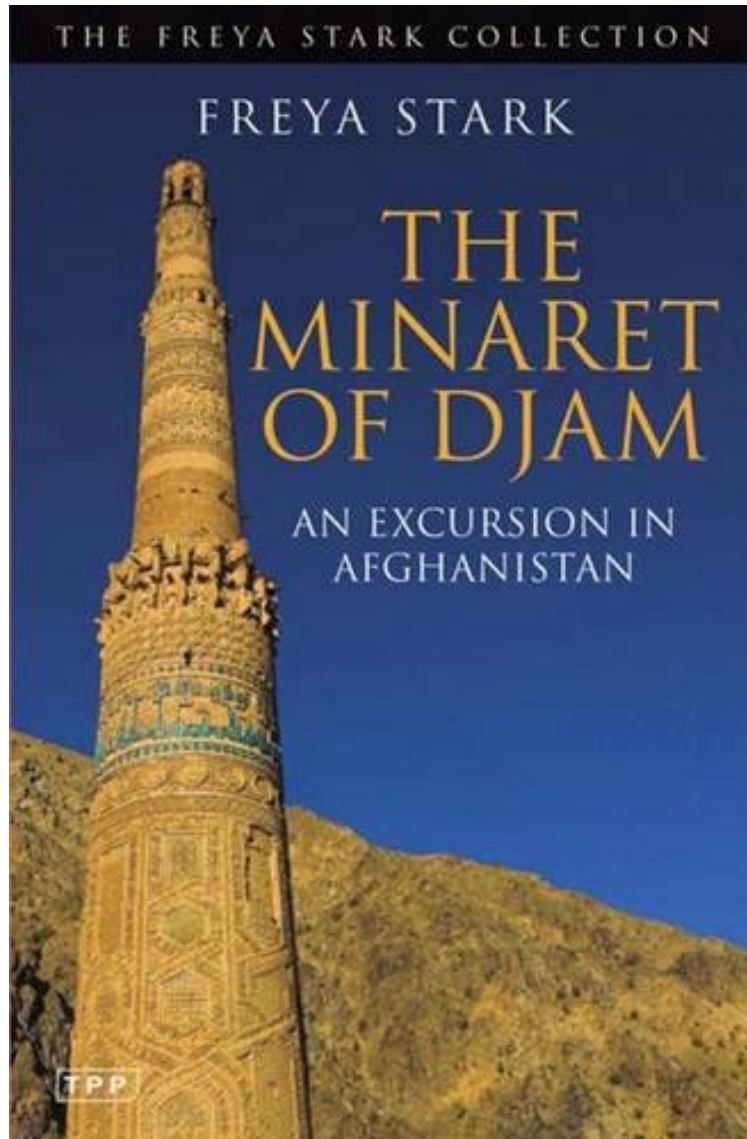


[Ebook free] The Minaret of Djam: An Excursion in Afghanistan (Tauris Parke Paperbacks)

The Minaret of Djam: An Excursion in Afghanistan (Tauris Parke Paperbacks)

Freya Stark

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Freya Stark : The Minaret of Djam: An Excursion in Afghanistan (Tauris Parke Paperbacks) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Minaret of Djam: An Excursion in Afghanistan (Tauris Parke Paperbacks):

13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Inspirational...By John P. Jones IIIThe Southern Gates of Arabia: A Journey in the Hadhramaut (Modern Library Paperbacks) was the first of Freya Stark's books that I've read. It

concerned her solo journey in the Hadraumaut (southern Yemen) in the 1930s. The Hadraumaut is still an obscure, and rarely visited place, and was once, when Stark's journey took place, the home of the Bin Laden family. But even they left! Now, its remoteness, and difficulty of access, are the essential ingredients that make it a convenient lair from which Al Qaeda can operate. Of course, the Americans are still in Afghanistan, which used to be their prime base. And that country is the subject of this delightful book. Hit the "fast forward" button a bit from the '30s; the year was 1968, and Ms. Stark, indomitable and curious as always, at the age of 75, decides to journey to the Minaret of Djam, in the very center of the country. As with the stock market and love, timing is everything. In a decade, these casual wanderings would end, as the country would be consumed by war. But even in 1968 such a journey presented a formidable challenge, but being killed by the natives was generally not one of them. Serendipity helped, along with her connections at the British Embassy, and she and a friend were able to ride in a Land Rover, in the company of a couple who were knowledgeable of the logistical requirements, and delightful hosts. Occasionally they stayed in what passed for hotels along the route, but they often camped. And therein lay the inspirational part: Stark, at 75, taking a bath in a cold mountain stream, and not even mentioning it was cold. There is absolutely no "whining" in this book; mainly it is only the enthusiasm of an inveterate traveler seeking out what is around the next bend. The principal route between Herat and Kabul is the southern one, via Kandahar, on a paved road, built, half and half, by the Russians and the Americans. A more difficult, and less traveled road, is the northern one, via Mazar-i-Sharif. The third one, almost never attempted, is right through the middle, and it is the one Stark took. There were able to stay at Bamian, along the way, which WAS the site of the largest Buddhist statues in the world, until the Taliban blew them up. Stark has a keen eye, and envisioned running into Chaucer along the way, a metaphor for people living in the Middle Ages. She would try to identify the anomaly, perhaps a metal jerry can, that would not have fit in the picture several hundred years before. Stark would have been a wonderful travel companion, quite erudite, and fluent in Farsi and Arabic. She knew the history of Central Asia, and the terminal decline that occurred after the armies of Genghis Khan demolished the previous civilizations. Indeed, the Minaret of Djam, of which so very little is actually known, stood as a mute exclamation mark to that terminal decline. She packed much insightful observations into this short book. Consider: "Even raids and small wars in the long desert summers are a proof and constant reminder of the general fluidity of ownership, and are less indulged in from necessity, I have often thought, than from an unconscious desire to mitigate boredom, which is possibly the basic origin of war." Or, as a brief forerunner to arguments on the necessity of "nation building": "What do you do for security?" an acquaintance had asked in Kabul: "We give sweets to the children." And she is scathing towards inept, unprepared fellow travelers: "No one would think it anything but silly to climb the Matterhorn with a frayed rope or useless shoes; but these young adventurers who have not lifted a finger in study or preparation think it nothing to live off people poorer than themselves..." I really didn't think the numerous black and white photos added to the book. Many were fuzzy, and poorly composed. I would highly recommend the works of Roland and Sabrina Michaud, for stunning color photographs taken during the same period, particularly Afghanistan, *Memoire de l'Afghanistan* (French Edition) and *Caravans to Tartary*. Kudos to the publisher, Tauris Parke, who are in the process of re-issuing all of Stark's work, with the next one slated to be *The Lycian Shore* (John Murray Travel Classics) which should undercut the current outrageous prices currently being asked for an older edition. Finally, on a personal note, I travelled in Afghanistan only three years after Stark's trip. At least I knew I was "unprepared," and therefore took the road most travelled, via Kandahar, now the stronghold of the Taliban. If I had only known that Afghanistan would become "impassable," probably for the rest of my life, I would have lingered longer than the 11 days. So, from the safety of my "armchair," it was a pleasure to travel again, vicariously, along with Ms. Stark, with visions of future mountain streams, in safer climes. A solid 5-stars. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Virtual excursion is better than nothing. By Eugenijus. Already six years passed from the day I visited the Minaret of Djam (Afghans call it "Minar-e Jam"). And since then I couldn't find nothing what may be a symbol of Western Afghanistan. As the part of the former Persian Empire the city of Herat was famous as city of poets. And Minaret of Djam is the symbol of Ghorids Dynasty. Today is too dangerous to visit Minaret. This book for many of you can be the only possibility to touch more than 800 years history. And if you have a friend, who had served in Western Afghanistan, this book might be the best gift. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Title misleading - more of a travel journal about Afghanistan in general. By Pamela Graham. This is an interesting read; but there are not very many pictures. It is actually quite a dated book, which I didn't realise. It's written in a 'flowery' style, and is obviously more of a travel journal, other than a factual read. A lot of the book deals with Afghanistan in general, with just one or two chapters about the minaret - but I bought it as there is little else available about the structure.

Freya Stark traveled the difficult and often dangerous journey from Kabul to Kandahar and Herat in search of one of Afghanistan's most celebrated treasures, the Minaret of Djam. This magnificent symbol of the powerful Ghorid Empire that once stretched from Iran to India lies in the heart of central Afghanistan's wild Ghor Province. Surrounded by over 6,000 foot high mountains and by the remains of what many believe to have been the lost city of Turquoise Mountain, one of the greatest cities of the Middle Ages, Djam is, even today, one of the most inaccessible and remote places in Afghanistan. When Freya Stark traveled there, few people in the world had ever laid eyes on it or managed to

reach the desolate valley in which it lies.

The Minaret of Djam is filled with history and introspection but also with people But the heart of the book lies in Kabul, where Stark looks out over the garden of the British Embassy. -- The New Yorker