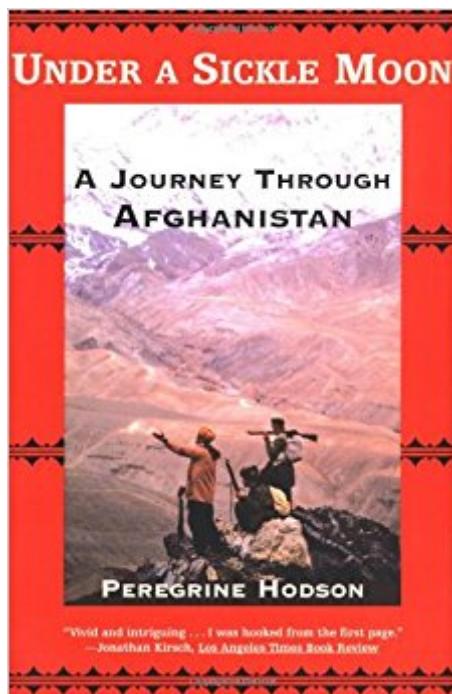


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Under A Sickle Moon: A Journey Through Afghanistan



Synopsis

In 1984 journalist Peregrine Hodson crossed the Pakistan border into Afghanistan with rebel mujahedin smuggling arms and ammunition, beginning a thousand-mile journey through the war-torn nation. Fluent in Farsi, he was able to observe the war with stunning intimacy and eloquently capture the essence of the Afghan people and their culture. As the travelers survived bombings by Soviet aircraft, an ambush by a rival faction, and becoming swept up in a major offensive, Hodson would come to gain a unique perspective on their hopes for peace and religious devotion. Bringing together travel writing, war reportage, and history, this is a richly rendered portrait of a complex people. "Gripping and moving ... [a] powerful account of a war that has often been described as 'forgotten.'" -- Gail Pool, The Christian Science Monitor "Will long remain the most vivid account of a strange and horrible wrong." -- Ahmed Rashid, The Independent (London) "Vivid and intriguing." -- Jonathan Kirsch, -- Los Angeles Times Book Review

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Customer Reviews

In the spring of 1984, British journalist Hodson traveled 1500 miles in Afghanistan, walking, living and dodging Soviet attacks with mujahedin, the rebel fighters. In this well-written, vivid, poignant account, he paints a portrait of a struggle that seems to resemble the Vietnamese battle against U.S. forces 20 years ago. Soviet helicopters and jets dominate the skies and seem to have "free-fire" zones, but despite their high-tech edge, they have no effective control in the countryside. And the fighters Hodson met are instilled by a deep conviction in their cause. Typically one mujahed states, "If all the country is burnt, all the trees dead and all the rivers dry, we will still fight.

Afghanistan is a battlefield in a war between God and Satan." Hodson's experiences are an adventure tale full of incongruities: he hikes through dangerous territory listening to Bob Dylan and Bach on his Walkman. He accompanies men bringing weapons into the country from Pakistan who then lose their munitions when they are ambushed by rival mujahedin. He loses most of his luggage fording a river and argues about religion with his hosts. Highly recommended. Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Disguised as a native, British journalist Hodson traveled in 1984 in northeastern Afghanistan with some mujahedin resistance fighters. Although his account includes friendly camaraderie, beautiful landscapes, and interesting market towns, the gripping emphasis is on the hazards and hardships and the Islamic fervor that inspires the Afghans in their struggle against the Soviets. There are long grinding marches, the author's agonizing digestive problems and fevers, frequent danger in dodging Soviet bombs and troops, and tenseness in the many political and religious discussions with his Afghan companions. The author wonders, as will the reader, why the world media virtually ignore the utter devastation wrought by the Soviets in Afghanistan.Roger W. Fromm, Bloomsburg Univ. of Pennsylvania Lib.Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I agree with the other reviewers. More important for me was the perspective Hodson gives concerning Islamic attitudes and beliefs. That those fighting the Russians often saw Russia and the US as similar is sobering and can help us to better appreciate Islam and its adherents. As a WASP, personal experience and books like "Under a Sickle Moon" have contributed to my recognizing that the concerns expressed in the Middle East and elsewhere have validity and must be addressed before many thorny issues can be fully resolved.

Hodson succeeds because he avoids the self congratulatory tone of many of this kind of travel narrative. He suffers with acute diarrhea, fever and eventually contracts hepatitis as a result of his arduous trip through the mountainous regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan, mostly the latter. This account avoids taking sides and does an excellent job showing what everyday life in the 80's in Afghanistan was like. Interesting how the "common" people often resented the Mujahedin for bringing attacks to their home turf. Sometimes the rebels are treated as heroes, sometimes as villains, but in any case we view all the contradictions, narrow point of view (one group thought Hitler was a great man simply because at one point he fought the "evil" Russians who were at war with

their country) and fanatical devotion to the Islamic ideal. Though not as literary as other travelogues, Hodson achieves a gritty, down and dirty tone that serves his narrative well. An excellent read and an impressive journey into a dangerous and complicated land.

This book is really great. I loved travelling with Peregrine Hodson (figuratively) as he walked the walk through Afghanistan. He describes the people and landscape very poignantly. We see the war with Russia from their eyes. If you want to understand the mindset of typical Afghans, as they fight to defend their country, and struggle to survive a war they don't understand, this book is very helpful.

If you are looking for a war story then this is not the book.

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