



Caravanserai

Traces, Places, Dialogue in the Middle East

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- Stunning, powerful photographs, illuminated by contributions from some of the most eminent writers, thinkers, and journalists specialising in the Middle East and foreign relations, combine to present these roadside inns found along ancient caravan routes in the Muslim world

A 'caravanserai' is a roadside inn found along ancient caravan routes in the Muslim world. For centuries the caravanserais served as staging posts in the Middle East and Central Asia, providing accommodation to traders, pilgrims, and other travellers along the Silk Road that connected China, India, and Europe. The caravanserais were vital nodes in what was in effect the first globalised overland network and trading system. Thousands of these caravanserais were built and successfully operated. They survived empires, caliphates and wars until the demise of the caravan trade. Those that have not vanished, have become crumbling ruins, or survive as hotels, museums, shops, storage space, living quarters, or military outposts. In the tumultuous state of relations between the Western and Muslim worlds today, the caravanserais stand as evidence of ancient multi-cultural exchange and trade. They inspire the quest to find such new platforms of multi-cultural dialogue for the future. Belgian photographer Tom Schutyser has travelled the Silk Road numerous times in fifteen years, first photographing caravanserais in northeast Iran. For this project, Schutyser chose the levant region of Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan, photographing both ruined and restored caravanserais as well as the landscape and surroundings of these buildings, seeking to capture the sense of history still present in these places. His stunning, powerful photographs, illuminated by contributions from some of the most eminent writers, thinkers, and journalists specialising in the Middle East and foreign relations, combine to present a new dimension on the debate about the region as it is today. Text in English and French.

Tom Schutyser is a Belgian documentary photographer and researcher who specializes in architecture and history. His coverage of caravanserais has been shown in galleries in Paris, Beirut, and Portland, Oregon. **Andrew Lawler**, a contributing editor to science and archaeology magazines, also writes for *Smithsonian*, *Discover*, *National Geographic* and other publications. **Reza Aslan**, a scholar of religions and Professor of Creative Writing at University of California at Riverside, a member of the Council on Foreign relations and a bestselling author. **Rachid al-Daif** is a writer whose novels have been translated from Arabic into eleven languages. **Robert Fisk** is a multiple award-winning journalist on the Middle East, based in Beirut. He writes for *The Independent* and other publications. **Dominique Moisi** is a senior adviser at the French Institute for International relations (IFRI), and the author of several books on international affairs. **Paul Salem** is director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Middle East Center.