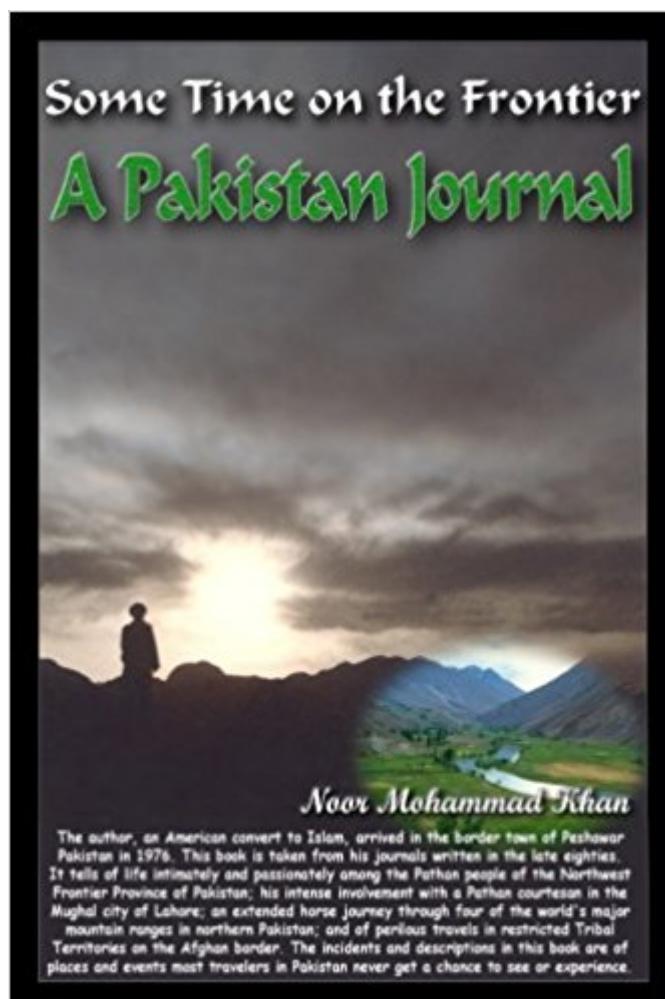


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Some Time On The Frontier: A Pakistan Journal



Synopsis

Adventure and romance in Pakistan among the Pathan people. This riveting memoir, a travelogue extraordinaire, starts with visits to Hira Mandi, the infamous red-light district in the old city of Lahore, to evening prayers in the Shrine of Data Baba and the majestic Badshahi Mosque. It mainly deals with the author's relationship with a Pathan courtesan and her family, and a five month horse expedition though the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Himalayan Mountains from Peshawar to Chitral, Kalash (Kafiristan), Gilgit, Kaghan Valley, and Kashmir. Finally, the relationship causes him to be kidnaped to Bajaur (Tribal Territory), where he finds himself ten miles off the paved road in a mud fort, near the Afghan border, tied to a cot with her. It describes life in the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan, and life within Pathan society, with great passionate intimacy. There are some interesting diversions in Dubai (staying with Waziri taxi drivers) and in Thailand. Lavishly illustrated with over 100 stunning photos.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Noor Mohammad Khan is an American convert to Islam (1978 - Kabul, Afghanistan). He lived in Peshawar, Pakistan, from 1982-1992, where he still has a house in the heart of the old city. He grew up playing in rock bands on the Sunset Strip in the late sixties; then taught yoga in Hawaii (Maui) - 1969/70. In 1971 he ran a store selling his own artwork in Los Angeles, he then went to Europe and North Africa. He returned to the United States in 1972 and played with the Velvet Underground out of New Hampshire and New York. In 1975 he journeyed to Afghanistan to study music (rabab) and record musicians. He owned and operated an import-export business selling handicrafts from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir and India, spending two years in Afghanistan between 1975-1979.

After some time in Indian Kashmir in 1980 he moved to Peshawar Pakistan, in the Northwest Frontier Province, in the early eighties to start a recording studio for local musicians. In 1988/89 he was involved with The Karakoram Equestrian Expedition, as a translator and chargÃ© d'affaires. With two other American converts, and a Pakistani friend, he made a 1000 mile, five month, horse trip through the Hindu Kush, Hindu Raj, Karakoram, and Himalaya Mountains, from Peshawar, to Chitral, Kalash Valley (Kafiristan), Gilgit, Kaghan, and Azad Kashmir. He currently lives in San Francisco with his Thai wife and son, with occasional visits to Pakistan, and hopes to refurbish his 'antique' house in Peshawar. MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR: www.pbase.com/noorkhan (includes sample chapters and all photos) & www.flickr.com/photos/noor-khan

I really enjoyed this book for its raw candor and wonderful descriptions most of us have no access to. There is something fascinating about the complexity of cultures in Pakistan to a Westerner and the many juxtapositions. The chapter about the author's trip to Dubai in the hopeless search for the prostitute he is in love with is painful to read, but a real indication of the author's state of mind at the time. Once again, we are taken to worlds most of us would never know. The horse journey was a diary account which I am not so fond of, but nevertheless full of information of interest to me as a former horse traveler myself. How different it is to travel on horseback in Pakistan compared to the U.S. I admire that the author, who was not a horseman himself, was willing to embark on such an arduous journey. It was obvious that he had feelings for the horses and the so Un-American virtue of patience to be able to blend into the culture throughout his stories. Anyone would envy the comaraderie and friendships he shared in his community. There is juxtaposition in the author's own character as well: a romantic and love-struck musician who is also a gun-toting adventurer willing to take untold risks searching for a prostitute in unpoliced tribal territories within sight of war-ravaged Afghanistan. Crazy is what his friends called him, for all, including the author knew he was being used, at risk of life. Crazy or not, beyond comprehension- that is the human condition. And he is willing to share it. His subtitle says it all: "For Nasreen, who couldn't see beyond the borders of her own life. For Noor, who couldn't see beyond the borders of his own illusion. And for Allah, Who has power over all things."

Noor Mohammad Khan bares his soul and writes unashamedly of love and loss. I found it even more difficult to not shed a tear at the loss of Horse and the Kafiristan debacle, even after having read the account before. Heart wrenching for a lover of horses. Full of the original journal entry's and photos. Invaluable in articulating the culture, taboos, and idiosyncrasies of a region terribly

misunderstood by westerners. A gem of first hand experiences and descriptions of a time and a region that can never be seen or experienced again as it once was.

I devoured this book then, immediately re-read it. That this is an amazing story is well described by other reviewers here. It's a love story and a beautiful travelogue but for me the fascination is found in his depiction of the people and culture of Central Asia with its emphasis on Pakistan. Reading this book and viewing Mr Khan's photos www.pbase.com/noorkhan in particular the shots of Peshawar [the Paris of the Pashtuns] will be rewarding to the interested reader. There is much for the musician and music lover as well. The author has recorded many of Pakistan's Pashtun music masters who can be heard on his YouTube channel. In this tragically polarized political era this book gives a totally different picture of the people and culture.

I loved everything about this book. As someone who is deeply interested in different aspects of Pakistani culture, but too broke/apprehensive about visiting, this was a great view into that area. The journal format reminds me of a Burroughs style "daily routine", and made me instantly transport to the place; clearly imagining the sites, sounds, smells and tastes. Coming home to a fresh cup of chai and this book was a daily treat, and I now feel a bit of emptiness after I have finished it. I'm open to suggestions for other books taking place in the same areas and time periods, but I have a feeling this one is very unique and not easily replicated. The honest and no nonsense approach of the author was refreshing and instead of trying to sugarcoat things, the story was presented raw. I can recommend this book to people interested in viewing a little slice of history that may never exist again in the same way, or anyone in the mood for a classic style adventure story with an edgy twist.

This book could have been trimmed back some -- there's a lot here -- but the central story, of the American convert Noor's obsessive love for a Pakistani prostitute in Lahore and the incredible adventures that his longing for her spurs him into, is really gripping and pretty amazing. The book is very revealing about all sorts of normally hidden aspects of Pakistani life, and well worth reading. It's sometimes hard not to think, "Really? You DID that?" And sometimes it's as if the author himself can't quite believe he did. But he truly loves the culture of Peshawar and the Northwest Frontier Province and its people -- and the relationships, friendships and passing encounters here are vivid and ring true. His encounter with a wandering holy man at the end is just amazing. Things like this can actually happen in the same world where we live. Not every book can show us that.

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