

# Carpet Wars: From Kabul to Baghdad: a Ten-year Journey Along Ancient Trade Routes

*Christopher Kremmer*

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#13809005 in Books 2002-04-30Original language:English 9.00 x 6.50 x 1.50l, #File Name:  
0756777690448 pages | File size: 59.Mb

**Christopher Kremmer : Carpet Wars: From Kabul to Baghdad: a Ten-year Journey Along Ancient Trade Routes** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Carpet Wars: From Kabul to Baghdad: a Ten-year Journey Along Ancient Trade Routes:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Different PerspectiveBy endowdlyI really enjoy this book. The author presents the complex and intriguing culture contained in a specific context not many would use to describe the societal actions of Afghans. He presents the different tribal realities in a woolen way; using the carpet trade. How has the trade impacted culture and how has the culture affected the trade? You can see the way the wars and conflict in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion has affected and molded the carpet trade in the area; it's a very telling look at what is really going on. You need to read the book with a different approach; take in the how the trade has been affected to truly understand the insight the author is trying to provide.The author uses great words to describe what he sees. He uses a very colorful and telling narrative that pulls you along with his story. I recommend this book to the casual reader interested in different cultures, anybody interested in a first hand look at the carpet trade, and any one in the military who would be interested in getting a new perspective at the culture we are currently protecting and the enemy we are currently fighting.15 of 16 people found the following review helpful. One of the best travel books I have ever readBy DavidI finished this book about six weeks ago, and I can't stop thinking about it.So often travel literature-type books by westerners in these kinds of far-off places can be either too clever, cynical or condescending

at one end of the scale, or, at the other end too reverent, with a reverence that seems to really be an I-hate-where-I-am-from complex. Both extremes can get tiring pretty quickly. The Carpet Wars was exactly in the middle, and it was fascinating. It was extremely informative about the history, politics, religion and, yes, even the carpets of the region from Pakistan to Iran. Carpets were merely the thread (so to speak) that held the several first-hand accounts of travels to the region. Kremmer is a master story teller, and very funny. Sometimes it was hard to tell what was more enjoyable, the story he was telling or the way he was telling it. His accounts of places with which he is very familiar are told in the rich tones of a deep affection. When he is in a new place, like Isfahan, the account is in the vivid colors of someone seeing something for the first time, creating some of the best travel essays I have ever read. Seven weeks ago, Isfahan was just an exotic name to me, now it's at the top of places I hope I can see before I die. It's hard to say what recommends this book more, the fact that it is thoroughly enjoyable, or deeply informative. I haven't read Mr. Kremmer's book about Laos, but it is probably pretty good. Books like The Carpet Wars don't stick with you so long by accident. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Trip of a lifetime By Customerso many mixed emotions. Such a sad history of a fabulous area and Christopher transferred his love of the people, their carpets and their countries straight into my conciseness. I'm in total envy of his experiences.

Apart from oil, rugs are the Muslim world's best-known commodity. While rugs are found in most Western homes, the story of religious, political, and tribal strife behind their creation is virtually unknown. In *The Carpet Wars*, award-winning journalist Christopher Kremmer chronicles his fascinating ten-year journey along the ancient carpet trade routes that run through the world's most misunderstood and volatile regions -- Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, India, Pakistan, and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. Christopher Kremmer's odyssey through the crescent of Islamic nations began in the early 1990s, when he arrived in Afghanistan to meet the communist-backed president, Mohammed Najibullah. On the outskirts of Kabul, mujahideen rebels were massing while the carpet dealers of the old city continued to ply their timeless trade. Kremmer was in Kabul when the mujahideen turned their guns on one another after ridding the country of the hated communists. He was there when the Taliban came and the army of religious students -- aided by the wealthy Arab radical Osama bin Laden -- emerged from the scorched earth to implement their vision of "a pure Islamic state." Traveling through these territories, Kremmer chronicles Islamic societies as they were convulsed by dictatorship and greed and as refugees sought asylum in the West. He cemented lifelong friendships and met an unforgettable cast of characters, from nomads toiling on portable handlooms to shady merchants and leaders of the syndicates that control the bazaars. In the remote Hindu Kush, he celebrated Eid with the late Afghan guerrilla legend Ahmad Shah Massoud. In Kandahar, he took tea with Taliban leaders and went hunting for Osama bin Laden. He watched as a new generation questioned the power of the mullahs in Iran, while in Iraq the populace chafed under the weight of sanctions and Saddam Hussein's cult of personality. *The Carpet Wars* takes readers into a world where even the simplest motif on a rug can be filled with religious, tribal, and political significance, places where life bustles with bargaining and gossip in bazaars and teahouses, while nations crumble, leaders fall, and the final confrontation between freedom and terror looms. An edge-of-the-chair travel memoir, *The Carpet Wars* offers a personal, vivid, and revealing look at Islam's human face, wracked by turmoil but sustained by friendship, industry, and humor. It is also a historical snapshot of countries at the center of global confrontation that exploded onto the homefront on September 11, 2001.

.com In Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, Iran, Iraq, and the Central Asian republics, carpets are viewed as objects of reverence and expressions of the highest artistic achievement. As the region's second largest export behind oil, they are also big business. "The early Muslims inhabited lands where people were born on carpets, prayed on them, and covered their tombs with them. For centuries, carpets have been a currency and an export, among the first commodities of a globalized trading system," writes author Christopher Kremmer. Even in the midst of turmoil and war, a bazaar will spring up during breaks in the fighting and carpet merchants will quickly resume business as if nothing had happened. In this detailed look at the culture and recent history of these countries, the carpet trade serves as both backdrop and metaphor for the shadowy and complex politics of the region in which trickery, illusion, and manipulation are part of the game. The result of 10 years spent as a journalist in the region, Kremmer's book explains how the fragile web of tribal and religious alliances and the influence of outside powers have impacted the politics and economy of the area and began a continuous cycle of exile and return, along with the rise of militarism and terrorism. The book also serves as excellent travel writing, with fascinating anecdotes and telling conversations and encounters that illustrate the customs of a region that is now the focus of international attention. --Shawn Carkonen From Publishers Weekly An Australian journalist who's covered the Middle East and Central Asia for 10 years, Kremmer travels through Pakistan, India, Tajikistan and other countries, following the paths of the carpet trade, the region's largest export industry after oil. The carpet is both his entry point into these largely Islamic worlds and a symbol of the rich tapestry of cultures that he discovers, but Kremmer isn't bound by this narrow focus: he talks not only to rug merchants and others involved in the trade, but to students, politicians, cab drivers and heads of secret police. Obviously enamored of the region and its peoples, Kremmer lovingly describes the rituals and texture of their lives,

from tea ceremonies to the clamorous bazaars. At the same time, Kremmer weaves in a great deal of history, both of the 500-year-old carpet trade and of the political upheavals in the area since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Whether in Baghdad or Peshawar, he shows how strife in the form of the Gulf War's aftermath and the tyrannical rule of the Taliban affects the economic fortunes of his subjects. Though somewhat sprawling, this work is a standout for its lucid historical overviews and, more importantly, the dramatic, intimate depictions of daily life. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Kremmer (Stalking the Elephant Kings) has spent ten years in Asia reporting for the Australian press. Here he uses the centuries-old carpet trade, which he says "represents common ground between Westerners and Muslims," as his motif for writing about his travels in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Tajikistan, Kashmir, and Iran. He spends a great deal of time in Afghanistan and reveals a lot about the political situation there before and after September 11. As an Australian, Kremmer gives us a less biased picture than the Bush administration, although he is highly critical of the Taliban and Islamic militants. His book offers a helpful look at the politics of these central Asian Muslim countries, showing the appalling poverty, misery, and hypocrisy of the peoples and governments. Although some technical descriptions of carpet making and dealing are included, Kremmer remains focused on his travels through the Islamic world. This compelling narrative is recommended for all libraries. George M. Jenks, Bucknell Univ., Lewisburg, PA Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.