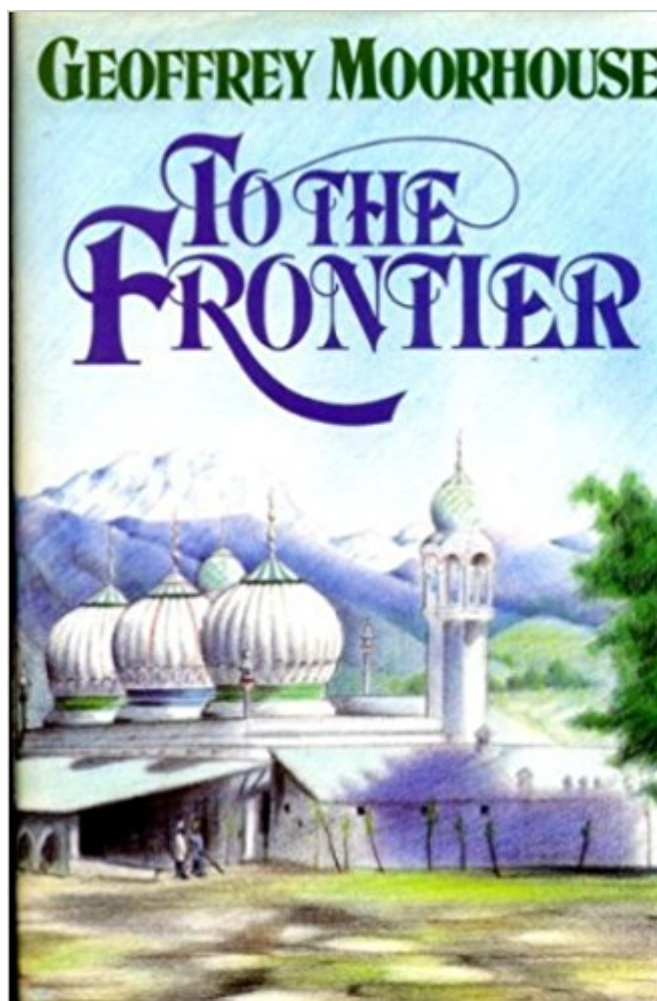




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To The Frontier



Synopsis

To the Frontier is the compelling and vivid account of Geoffrey Moorhouse's three-month journey through Sind, Baluchistan and the Punjab to the legendary North-West frontier of Pakistan. From there he reached the closed Khyber Pass and the border with Afghanistan which he was - uniquely - permitted to cross, and scaled the highest peaks of the Hindu Kush. Moorhouse's evocation of a beautiful, turbulent and little-known region is masterly and unforgettable. 'It was high time someone put Pakistan on the travel bookshelf, and this is what Geoffrey Moorhouse has done - with style, relish, much wit and enormous good humour ... No one has better captured the scenic contrasts of this diverse country.' Sunday Telegraph --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Geoffrey Moorhouse has been described as "one of the best writers of our time" (Byron Rogers, The Times), "a brilliant historian" (Dirk Bogarde, Daily Telegraph) and "a writer whose gifts are beyond category" (Jan Morris, Independent on Sunday). His numerous books -- travel narratives, histories, novels and sporting prints -- have won prizes and been translated into several languages: To the Frontier won the Thomas Cook Award for the best travel book of its year. In 1982 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and in 2006 he became Hon DLitt of the University of Warwick. He has recently concentrated on Tudor history, notably with The Pilgrimage of Grace and, in 2005, Great Harry's Navy, which has just been followed by The Last Office: 1539 and the Dissolution of a Monastery. Born in Lancashire, he has lived in a hill village in North Yorkshire for

many years. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you travel to the Khyber area today, you will see that the people and landscape how the author describes them have not changed at all. I found his account in so far like a mirror of what I found there in 2007. But although the narrative is in deed anecdotal and to a great extent entertaining it has its lengths as well and I could not find so much adorable in it as the "Guardian" liked it to comment. Maybe the author was also seeking for too much adorable. I found it rather disturbing to include the Sindh into "The Frontier", although it makes some sense, since the clue to the turbulence at the Frontier is more in the Madrasahs of the big cities like Karachi than in the villages of the Khyber Pass area. The people who live there in the Hindukush, mostly Pashtunes (Pathans), although being one of the most ferocious human breed, are indeed great people in so many respects, but - alas! - they often appear not to have education enough to can measure what is right for them when they make political moves. Think of the Germans in Nazi times then you have an idea of what I mean. These people have no right guidance and this makes them so unpredictable. And as the author cites the Superintendent Malik: "Nothing much can be expected of people with empty stomachs!" But even with full stomachs, these people think big of themselves and nothing ever changed this. The British tried already in colonial times, but failed. But the insight of the author was more thorough than mine, when he states something which was not apparent for me, filling a whole chapter in his book: the heroine addiction of the Pakistanis due to the illegal trade along the border line. "In just 2 years the number of users in the country had risen from zero to thirty thousand at least. Most of the addicts were well-to-do people in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore." Although my contact man, a television man in Islamabad, could not (or did not want to) admit that there is such a real problem in a society given to Islam sovereignty, I think the author is right. The fields of Afghanistan are close by and on both sides live Pashtunes who have no objections or remorse to make a business with their fellow men. Narcotics have always been used in this part of the world! "The British East Indian Company merely perpetuated this ruling monopoly in its own heyday, extending the market to China, and on a smaller scale to Europe until the Germans discovered the process of acetylation in which morphine refined further into heroin. Likewise the heroic tribe of the Pashtunes succumb to the un-heroic consume of drugs. They should know it! Drugs where not on my itinerary, but the political ideas of the Pashtunes, openly expressed in Peshawar, the Frontier town. Moorhouse could not oversee the same issue. Do the Pashtunes want their own responsibilities? How far will it go? "What is all the talk about Pashtunistan one day...we have the thing already, right here, right now!" Right, because for them there are no borders at all, they move

around wherever and whenever they want. 2 Million Afghans live in Peshawar and around and they have the same cultural and ethnic affinity as their Pashtune cousins in Pakistan. Apart from blood, language and religion they have in common the Pukhtunwali which is the rigid code of the Pashtunes. "They do not accept anybody else's laws in their tribal territories." The most alien to outsider's experience "of human behaviour in the twentieth century" could be "Badal", the most powerful element of this code. "It means revenge, either personal or communal, and it is pursued regardless of any other consideration, and with no thought for the time needed to accomplish it, which has occasionally taken more than a generation." Good is Moorehouse in the description of such Pashtune peculiarities. Another example, here about the status of women in the tribal society: "No women in the world can be more jealously possessed by their menfolk than the women of the Pathans, and it is both rare and dangerous for a male outside her family so much as to look upon a Pathan woman's face." Indeed I saw none at all in Peshawar. And if things go really bad: "The custom is for the woman to be shot by her own father or brother, the man to be executed by his father or uncle. The honour of two families is thereby cleansed of all stain." The Pashtunes did not and do not submit to alien rule, as most Indians did. "They made accommodations, but many of their tribesmen spent their lives in the desert and the hills, eager to kill any outsider who infringed the smallest tribal claim". Still goes, you have to be a man to be accepted there! And hard to yourself. There is the dramatic topography, the climate that is always harsh, either hot and dusty or savage bitter cold, no warm shower, no restaurants, hard to be successful in what you intend to do! Respectable is that Moorehouse succeeded to get acquainted with so many of these people who show often reservation towards westerners. And he seemed to have his connections. My connection was mainly limited to the ever present Khyber police escort. Only in Peshawar you can move freely. But beware what you say!

It was a trip Kipling might have envied. After landing in Karachi, inveterate wanderer and preeminent travel writer Geoffrey Moorhouse spent the next three months living out of a haversack and slogging on foot and by jeep, train, and broken-backed busses and trucks as he journeyed to the legendary North-West Frontier. To the Frontier is his highly readable account of that extraordinary adventure.

-- from book's back cover

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