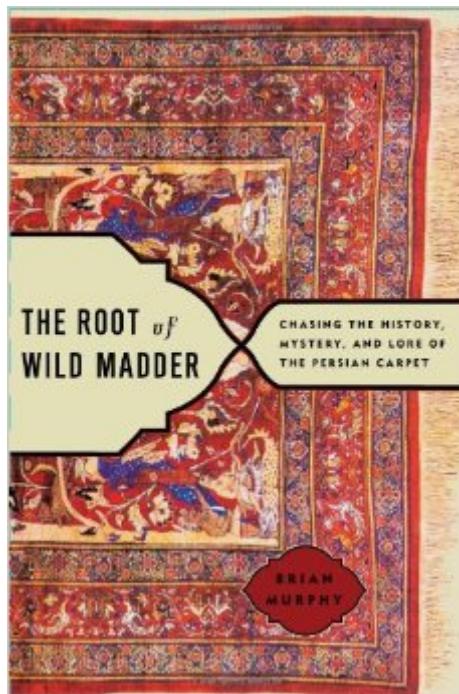


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The Root Of Wild Madder: Chasing The History, Mystery, And Lore Of The Persian Carpet



Synopsis

From the remote villages of Afghanistan and Iran, down the ancient trade routes travelled for centuries, to the bazaars of Tehran and the markets of the Western world, every Persian carpet has a story to tell. Coming from a region known for its instability, this art form is one of the few constants, transcending religious and political turmoil. Woven into Persian carpets are centuries-old mysteries of faith and humanity, whirled into colours, patterns and symbols that represent the key to understanding. Each carpet tells a story in its fibres and design and carries a deeper tale in its forgotten history and the anonymity of its maker. How can a man sell a carpet to feed his family when he believes the soul of his grandmother is borne up in its intricate knots? Carpets, as both art and commodity, represent basic survival as well as the search for human perfection. Told in exquisite prose befitting one of the world's loveliest art forms, THE ROOT OF WILD MADDER offers accessible explanations of the patterns, knots and origin of these carpets. From how to tell a quality carpet from a cheap copy to where the dyes come from (madder root provides red), the book presents practical information about carpets while exploring the artistic, religious and cultural complexities of this enigmatic region. Part travelogue and part exploration into the enduring mysteries of Persian carpets, THE ROOT OF WILD MADDER brings readers to far flung corners of the world that few Westerners will ever see in person.

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Customer Reviews

Nothing quite so enhances a space as an Oriental carpet, however humble or elegant. Carpets may enliven the spirit and mind as well, and here is the enduring significance of their art, never ending. After reading Brian Murphy's journey among them, newly begun, we join him in our own unending adventures. There is a spirit to this book reaching out to both the novice and the collector. One also learns a lot about Iran and Afghanistan, their culture and history past and present. This book is an essence of Persia. Murphy was himself a novitiate as he takes us with him to meet carpet merchants, weavers, and dyers, urban and rural. He communicates a searching, often wide-eyed, innocence while meeting with myriad folk. He handles this contrast appealingly, rather as if we were with him, a style greatly effectuating what he wants to tell us. I and our carpets together, will never be the same. This volume is also a welcome relief from the plainness of so many modern publications. The type styles, the look and feel of the paper, and the designs of the jacket, covers, and end papers are an aesthetic delight and most appropriate to the story.

I've been a carpet collector (primarily tribal piece) for well over 20 years; this book spoke to me as some carpets speak to me! I'm especially grateful for the quotes attributed to Hossein Payghambari of Nomad carpet shop in Isfahan. I rarely read a book more than once BUT this has drawn me to do so because of the rich text and the author's compassion for his subject. This is MUST read for anyone with a heart for carpets.

By experiencing Brian Murphy's trip through Afghanistan and Iran and his search for answers to a number of questions he had and developed about the carpets and the people involved in making and selling them, I learned a great deal. I had no idea what I would learn would be so extensive and interesting. It was one of those books that I didn't want to end. Since the chances of my visiting there are slim, I really am thankful to have seen and experienced the people and culture through Murphy's eyes. His love of the rugs and the people are obvious to the reader, and he clearly wants to share what he knows and has experienced with others. I highly recommend reading this book.

I see this book as several books in one. Just like the title 'The Root of Wild Madder' which says nothing at all about rugs, unless you're really in with the right crowd, the book is nominally on rugs. But also the book is also: on travel to places that most of us don't want to visit, would be afraid to visit on politics, specifically on what's going on in Iran - he sees the strong theocracy, but he also sees cracks around the base on history, particularly on Persia and of course it's about the search for wild madder (the source of red dyes before the advent of chemical dyes). Above all else, this book is

a delight to read. It reads almost like a novel, while it conveys information that would be very, very hard to find elsewhere. It's almost, but not quite, enough to make one want to go to Iran.

An enjoyable book, but it's been done before and better in "The Carpet Wars" by Chris Kremmer. Murphy provides some interesting insights into carpet collecting, poetry and mysticism that goes along with the folk-art and aesthetics of carpets, and he does give some historical insight, but his writing style is hackneyed and pedestrian, and his historical and cultural insights are only skin deep, nothing you can't read in an encyclopedia. His attempt at wide eyed innocence and naivete seems contrived, overly sentimental and condescending. I often wondered how such a clueless, myopic, provincial person could become a world travelling, intrepid journalist and stringer for the AP. For a great travelogue and carpet hunting escapades along with historical and cultural insight read Kremmer's "Carpet Wars". Kremmer knows what he's talking about and we learn much more about the history and culture of the area than Murphy provides. Kremmer goes to more places, while Murphy travels to some of the same places that Kremmer does, but his descriptions aren't as deep. I often wondered if Murphy was consciously following Kremmer to the same places. However, to his credit, Murphy does provide more insights into the history and technique of dying and carpet making than Kremmer.

I always get lost in this book. Mr Murphy is an excellent storyteller, and his carpet explorations gave him plenty of stories to tell! For me personally, it was interesting to see some of the changes in Iran since the Revolution Mr Murphy mentions. I'm not a carpet fanatic like he is, but he makes me want to learn more.

The authors love of Persian carpets is evident on every page of this book and we are presented with his travels around the wilds of Afghanistan and Iran in his quest for the meaning and arts behind the beautiful carpets he is so in love with. I feel I've learnt some interesting things about Persian rugs, their makers and sellers that I didn't know before. You also get a view of modern Afghanistan and Iran that isn't peopled solely by religious extremists that the western press would have you believe at times. Things do change over time both for good and ill in the life of a people and that is reflected in the Persian carpets we see in the west. Despite all these things at times I wanted to strangle the author as he rambles on for pages about the beauty and difficulty of the poetry of the Persian author Hafez and its impact on how you view carpets. In short this is an enjoyable, but frustrating book, that for me just misses the mark as something I would read again.

A rare non-political book that takes the reader to Iran and Afghanistan on a lovely journey. If you are a lover of carpets, this is a must read. If you're familiar with the region, it may seem a bit elementary in the telling of political context, etc.... but the story is about carpets. So simplicity forgiven.

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