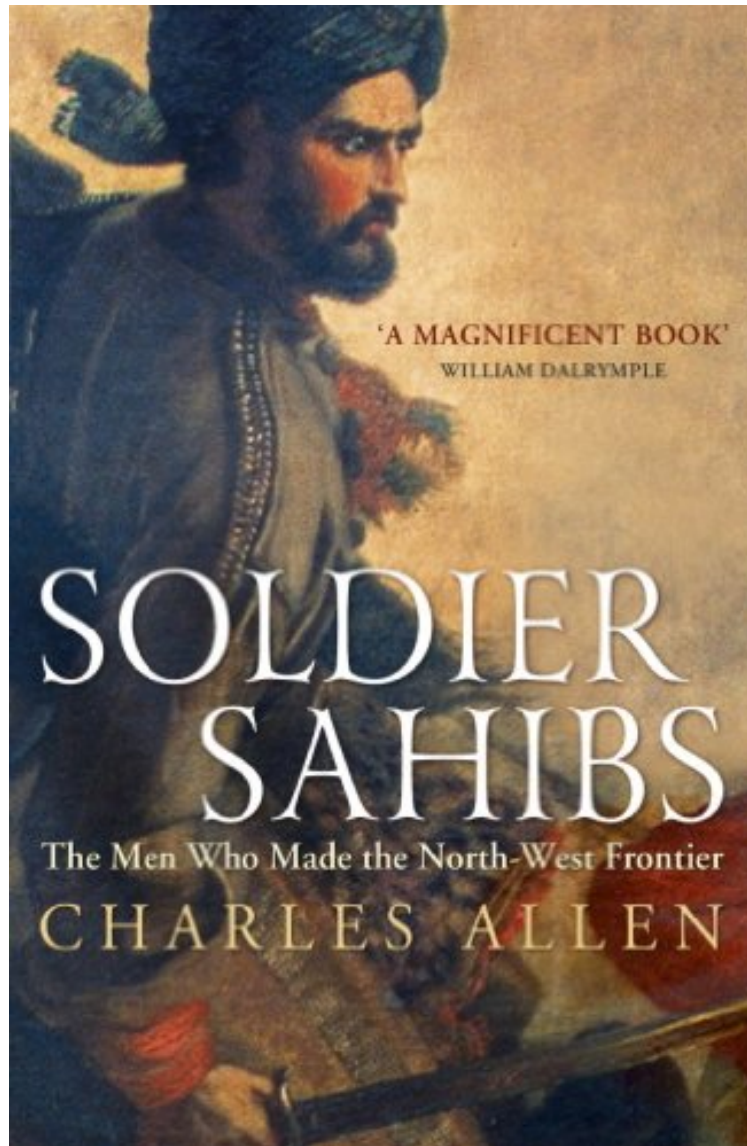


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Soldier Sahibs: The Men Who Made the North-West Frontier (English Edition)

Von Charles Allen

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Von Charles Allen : Soldier Sahibs: The Men Who Made the North-West Frontier (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Soldier Sahibs: The Men Who Made the North-West Frontier (English Edition):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Of dusty

heroism Von Roman Nies The author was born in India where six generations of his family served under the British Raj. His father was a political officer in the North-West Frontier. He must have brought him to the idea of dealing with the affairs of the Raj which was in that area always also and most prominently a military issue. He himself returned after the usual education in England to the Indian Subcontinent in 1966 to work with the Voluntary Service Overseas in Nepal. He made a name as a historian who specialized in British colonial and military subjects. And a specialist he is in deed. This book is about the British Raj in northern India and the Himalayas. For anybody who has no knowledge at all in this field, it must be difficult in parts to read, if not out of date. Here my warning: this is not only a book about soldiery! For the author the "Soldier Sahibs" stand for something on a larger scale. They are to blame for making the famous North-West Frontier. So, this book is about that border-line and its adjacent land which is now Pakistan and Afghanistan foremost. The book is mainly about events in north-west British India (which included Pakistan) between 1839 and 1857, spanning the advent and mortal departure of a certain cadet, whose proceedings in that exotic, demanding surrounding is also described, and this very broad and detailed. An attempt to bring to life what seems to be so far away! Meanwhile the British East India Company extended its conquests to the very edge of the mountain barriers which define the northern boundaries of the Indian sub-continent, a land that has always seen wars and revolt and still has, long since the influence of the British faded away. I read this book because I visited these areas and I tried to get a better idea of what made the area to what it is now. It is still all about power, economical advantage on one side and the self-establishment and self-determination, self-rule and other "selfes" cause the people who live there are concerned about their "selfes" and nothing else, a lesson still to be learned by the western allies, it seems. We hear here a lot about army organization which is not so interesting today, although it helps to understand the procedures then, when we know that there were regular and irregular troops of the Company; that the Native infantry was largely made up of recruits from certain regions, more or less difficult to handle, and nearly all high-born Hindus from the Brahmin and Rajput upper castes, with the result that the men in these corps put caste and religious loyalty first. An infantry regiment raised in Punjab might have had two companies of Punjab Muslims, one of Sikhs and one of Hindu Dogras. That asked for trouble. Sometimes I had a tinge of suspicion that the author tends to hail the transporters of his stories, as far as the British are concerned, that special breed of British heroes: "Saints militant fired with Christian grace; beaux sabreurs, sans peur et sans reproche" who were "mostly young men of strong convictions and unlimited self-confidence, driven to the extraordinary things quite as much by their upbringing and motivation as by their personal qualities". A good match for the Afghans! And one never gave a thought to danger, would Neville Chamberlain write many years later after time had darkened the memory mercifully. At that time a sword and a horse was enough for a British gentlemen - and some cricket at home. Another factor was the religious conviction of those who saw themselves as the pioneers of "Christian civilization." God above and duty below! The author is asserting that one reason for the success of the British in combat was their strong faith and their favourite mark, the "IHS" the Greek letters for "Jesus my saviour". Many wrote of the recklessness with which the British soldiery went into battle in these times. We have to make a leap of imagination from our own faithless age, back to an era when the promise of the heavenly kingdom steeled the hearts of those who fought the good fight. Yeah, and drinks also played their part! How sweet it is to die for the nation! The author puts this in the mouth of the dying soldiers of the mutiny in Delhi. And dying was much! Even today you can visit over there cemeteries with graves of so many young men whose luck ran out. All of them gentlemen, of course, but in reality mostly Scots, Scots-Irish or Anglo-Irish, younger sons of small country squires, lairds and vicars who lacked the means to set them up at home. The Queen's Army, the Navy, the clergy - and India: these were the classic outlets that might, if fortune and patronage smiled, bring advancement sufficient to retire at fifty. India, as the well known borderer Sir Walter Scott wrote, "had become the corn chest of Scotland where we poor gentry must send our youngest sons as we must send our black cattle to the South". Not to speak of the masses of Indian soldiers who got never graves at all, due to the customs of the country. In my opinion this is also the shortcoming of the book. It is on Sahib soldiers, true, but a chapter on those who served them, would not have been too bad! Besides that the book is mainly on the wars of the period, Afghanistan 1839-1842, the Sikh wars 1845-49, the consolidation time till 1853, the Sepoy mutiny of 1857. A rough time for everybody! And everywhere! It was a particularly violent an gunsmoke filled period of time in which killings were daily routine on both sides. As heroic the soldier might have been, their commanders lacked some intelligence sometimes, or was it just the ignorance of a superior race that made them consider only their own affairs? How else could the mutiny be explained which broke out because muslim soldiers did not like to lick their cartridges with pork fat and Hindus neither theirs with beef? Another substantial element of this book is the interaction between local forces and the British in a more friendly and respectful way. The mutuality of East and West! And there is the frontier itself, as a border and imaginary line that runs for about a thousand kilometres between Pakistan and Afghanistan from one mountain top to the other, cutting right through the homelands of the Pashtune tribes, made up of poor soil, scrubby terrain, sandy and rocky mountainsides but with fertile valleys. Still a lure today, but hardly a paradise! And the main Frontier town Peshawar has its bazaars with large sections unchanged, still thronged by passers-by as varied and picturesque as they were in those days. Changed have the means of transport, the loudest and fastest being the cavalry, while now stinking and noisy trucks are endangering the streets - besides occasional bomb blasts. The life of the Frontier was hard and they

tread it daily to the brink of eternity between horror and beauty, between dust-storms and fragrance of flowers. Yes, not so much has changed. The North-West Frontier was to the British what the Wild West was for the US. It needed hard man for a hard country, merciless to the loser, with people who always carry guns but are also hospitable to the extremes. Throughout the British reign there was hardly one year that passed without any kind of military expedition to bring one or other of the clans to heel. The people still refuse to be a part of the whole, even if these means bringing wrath of governments down on their heads. An independent people - a stubborn people! A book only for the aficionados of the North-West Frontier myth! Another myth which has a strong reality! 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Historically interesting Von Andrej Manalsky The book describes several officers of the Raj involved in the Punjab Wars, the events on the North-West Frontier and the Mutiny. The events are presented in a well structured manner making the book a pleasant reading not only from the historical perspective. However the main characters are scattered throughout the text and it is not easy not to mix them up. At least in my case, after a while I have lost the track.

Kurzbeschreibung This text retells the story of a brotherhood of young men who together laid claim to one of the most notorious frontiers in the world: India's north-west frontier, which in the late 1990s forms the volatile boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Known collectively as Henry Lawrence's Young Men, each had distinguished himself in the East India Company's wars in the Punjab in the 1840s before going out to carve out names for themselves as politicals on the frontier. Drawing extensively on the men's diaries, journals and letters, Charles Allen weaves the individual stories of these Soldier Sahibs together with the tale of how they came together to save British India, ending climatically on Delhi Ridge in 1857. Pressestimmen A marvellous book in the best traditions of narrative history: colourful, informative and splendidly readable. I can give it no greater praise than to admit I would like to have written it myself SAUL DAVID in the DAILY TELEGRAPH Allen is an excellent guide through this fascinating territory ... [A] magnificent book' WILLIAM DALRYMPLE in the SUNDAY TIMES Kurzbeschreibung This text retells the story of a brotherhood of young men who together laid claim to one of the most notorious frontiers in the world: India's north-west frontier, which in the late 1990s forms the volatile boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Known collectively as Henry Lawrence's Young Men, each had distinguished himself in the East India Company's wars in the Punjab in the 1840s before going out to carve out names for themselves as politicals on the frontier. Drawing extensively on the men's diaries, journals and letters, Charles Allen weaves the individual stories of these Soldier Sahibs together with the tale of how they came together to save British India, ending climatically on Delhi Ridge in 1857.