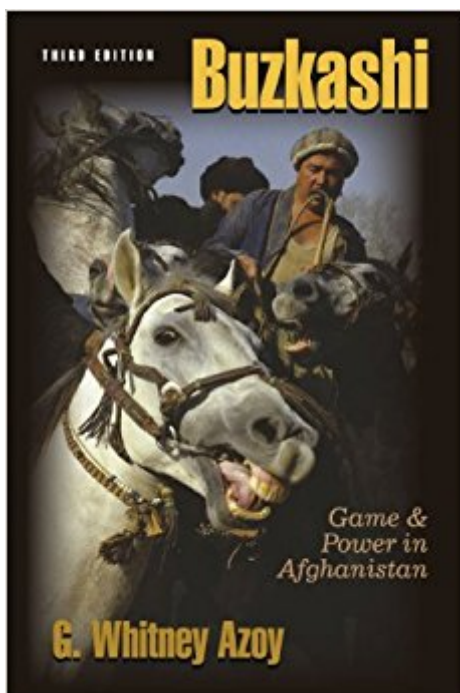


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# Buzkashi: Game And Power In Afghanistan



## Synopsis

Much has happened since *Buzkashi: Game and Power in Afghanistan* first appeared; the past three decades have devastated Afghanistan. Replete with significant updates, including a new chapter profiling Afghanistan's past and recent struggles, this richly illustrated Third Edition remains the first and only full-scale anthropological examination of a single sport, buzkashi, as well as a beautifully written longitudinal case study about the game's social significance. Azoy first describes how the game of buzkashi is played and introduces readers to its rich history, its roots in tradition, and the implicit and explicit meanings attached to it. Next, readers learn about the author's fieldwork and his ex-pat diplomatic experiences, including his personal journey toward understanding the complexities of this ancient game with its "wild-card quality." Azoy's captivating descriptions and his incisive analysis of buzkashi as a metaphor for political control and chaos, provide a window into the volatile nature of Afghanistan's political autonomy. Titles of related interest also from Waveland Press: Brennenman, *As Strong as the Mountains: A Kurdish Cultural Journey, Second Edition* (ISBN: 9781478629306); Jordan, *The Making of a Modern Kingdom: Globalization and Change in Saudi Arabia* (ISBN 9781577667025); and Omidian, *When Bamboo Bloom: An Anthropologist in Taliban's Afghanistan* (ISBN 9781577667001).

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## Customer Reviews

"Whitney Azoy is a great inspiration: a scholar, an adventurer, whose love of Afghanistan and Afghans--and his deep understanding of the place--runs through everything that he does." --Rory Stewart, British Member of Parliament and author of *The Places In Between* and *The Prince of the*

Marshes: And Other Occupational Hazards of a Year in Iraq" Azoy has been master of the game ever since this book was first published. Nobody can understand Afghanistan without understanding buzkashi and nobody can do that without reading Azoy. Power rests on personal reputation and performance--that is the criteria for politics in Afghanistan and for the game buzkashi which best reflects that. Azoy has brought his brilliant analytical skills to study a game through which we can decipher Afghan history, politics, and the present US occupation of that country. Over the decades, this book has held its ground amongst all the learned tomes that have been published on Afghanistan. The reason is that Azoy was the first and the best at understanding what makes the country tick--a game of the headless goat." --Ahmed Rashid, author of *Taliban: The Power of Militant Islam in Afghanistan and Beyond* and *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*" Buzkashi is the definitive description of this Central Asian sport in all its complexity. Although 'only a game,' the strategies employed in organizing buzkashi competitions transfer so readily to Afghan politics that the book constitutes a veritable 'Afghan Art of War' in which personal competition, reputation building, lavish spending, and alliance building are keys to success and survival. In this new and revised edition, Azoy's interviews with the most powerful commanders who fought Afghanistan's wars in the north demonstrate that the buzkashi model has lost none of its power in explaining today's Afghanistan." --Thomas Barfield, President of the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies" Full of a master storyteller's love of Afghanistan, Whitney Azoy's book transcends its subject of the game of buzkashi to reach a deeper sense of today's Afghan culture where institutions no longer exist and reputations, the only currency to gain followers and political momentum, are constantly in flux. Fun, heroic, and frequently sad, the latest edition of *Buzkashi* provides a window of understanding on a human level into what Afghanistan has endured and become." --Ronald E. Neumann, former US Ambassador to Afghanistan, President of the American Academy of Diplomacy, and author of *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan*" This new edition of *Buzkashi* turns a great book into a classic. Once again we witness subtle political analysis, a mapping of the political into ritual that stays current with our daily lives, and a rendering of human passion that adds a final touch to the height of drama--the reading of a tragedy. Buzkashi, the game and the spirit, a ritual enactment of a tradition that once tied together the Euro-Asian landmass, now enters our studies and classrooms with all the majesty, human resilience, and folly our world can allow." --Frederick H. Damon, Professor of Anthropology, University of Virginia and co-editor of *On the Order of Chaos: Social Anthropology and the Science of Chaos*

"At a time when the international community is realizing that it cannot resolve Afghanistan's conflicts, it is crucial to understand if not interpret what is going on. Azoy's new edition of Buzkashi provides an unusual insight into the true nature of Afghan politics, much of it based on personal reputation as a means of controlling events and getting things done. For anyone even mildly interested in this country with its lack of solid institutions and where everything is constantly up for grabs, or for those intent on exploring realistic new options for peace, Azoy's analysis of this rugged and highly symbolic game is more than just an indispensable read." -- Edward Girardet, author of *Killing the Cranes: A Reporter's Journey Through Three Decades of War in Afghanistan* and co-editor of *The Essential Field Guide for Afghanistan* "The previous edition of Azoy's work on buzkaishi was already a classic. This new edition has been substantially updated and is even more relevant and engrossing. It is a must-read not only for anyone interested in Afghanistan but also for anyone interested in the relationship between sports and culture--or for anyone who loves a ripping good yarn." -- Charles Lindholm, Professor of Anthropology, Boston University and author of *Generosity and Jealousy: The Swat Pukhtun of Northern Pakistan and The Islamic Middle East: Tradition and Change*

Buzkashi: Game and Power in Afghanistan. This book should be mandatory reading for any Politician, military personnel, or anyone else who needs to interact with Afghans and or Afghanistan. Buzkashi is a microcosm of Afghan struggle to succeed. It helps to explain the simplicity and baffling complexity of a country that consists of thousands of semi autonomous mini districts. This entire Islamic country has traditionally had a semi feudal society that revolves around "village" scale politics. Read it and understand the tremendous problem of dealing with a society whose way of life has been shattered by Communist strong arm methods, but, a country where every man is still a potential warrior. Where almost every citizen is divided along racial, tribal, and clan lines, but the traditional loyalties have been wiped out. Leaving strongman military power and religion as the binder. All in all a fascinating and entertaining read. Written by a brilliantly perceptive man.

You better live and breathe anthropology if you get this book. It is terrible! The writing is boring and lifeless. The topic goes from distasteful to simply boring. I love reading, especially non-fiction, but this book was bad and it was for a class so I had to push through it. BTW, I'm a 35 yo Masters student, not a whiny high schooler, I am being a bit whiny though :) How many different ways can you drag a decapitated and de-hoofed goat or calf carcass around the ground? This book will tell you. Which carcass takes longer to fall apart while being dragged and trampled, this book will tell

you. When attending an official game did you wonder who sits where and why when the game of Buzkashi is played in a stadium... this book will tell you in painful detail. This book is going in the Bon-Fire since that class has ended and I don't want to keep it or subject anyone else to have to read it. Don't get it unless you have to. Then question the mental state of the person who is requiring you to read this book...

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