

Åsne Seierstad

NON-FICTION

The Bookseller of Kabul *Bokhandleren i Kabul*

Cappelen 2002
282 Pages

For more than twenty years, Sultan Khan has defied the authorities, whether communist or Taliban, to supply books to the people of Kabul. He has been arrested, interrogated, and imprisoned, and has watched illiterate Taliban soldiers burn piles of his books in the street. Yet he has persisted in his passion for books, shedding light in one of the world's darkest places. This is the intimate portrait of a man of principle and of his family - two wives, five children, and many relatives sharing a small four-room apartment in this war-ravaged city. As they endure the extraordinary trials and tensions of Afghanistan's upheavals, they also still try to live ordinary lives, with work, relaxation, shopping, cooking, marriages, rivalries, and shared joys. Most of all, this is an intimate portrait of family life under Islam. Even after the Taliban's collapse, the women in Khan's family must submit to arranged marriages, polygamous husbands, and crippling limitations on their ability to travel, learn, and communicate with others.

Seierstad lived with Khan's family for months, experiencing first-hand Afghani life as few outsiders have seen it. Stepping back from the page, she allows the Khans to speak for themselves, giving us a genuinely gripping and moving portrait of a family, and of a country of great cultural riches and extreme contradictions.



PHOTO: CECILIE OWREN

Åsne Seierstad is a graduate in Russian, Spanish and philosophy from the University of Oslo. As a war correspondent, she covered the conflicts in Iraq (2003) and Afghanistan (2001) for the Scandinavian press and media. She worked for Norwegian Broadcasting's TV news from 1998 to 2000 and covered the war in Kosovo in 1999, among other things.

Seierstad has received a number of national and international prizes for her journalism. Her international break through came with *Bokhandleren fra Kabul* (*The Bookseller of Kabul*), with a total print run world-wide of more than 1,2 million copies. Seierstad's titles are sold to almost 40 countries.

AWARDS

SELECTED:

Gullruten prize for best TV report, 1999
Honorary Prize from the Freedom of Expression Foundation (Fritt Ord) (2001)
Freelancer of the Year, Norwegian Federation of Journalists, 2002
Bookseller's Prize 2002
Jonas Weiss Prize, (Swedish foreign office) 2003
Peer Gynt Prize 2003
The Journalist Prize 2003
Ilaria Alpi Journalistic Award 2003 (Italy)
EMMA (Ethnic Multicultural Media Awards) (UK) 2004

PREVIOUS TITLES

Hundre og én dag (Hundred and one days), 2003
Bokhandleren i Kabul (*The Bookseller of Kabul*), 2002
Med ryggen mot verden (*Back against the World*), 2000

RIGHTSHOLDER

The Wylie Agency | mail@wylieagency.co.uk
| www.wylieagency.com