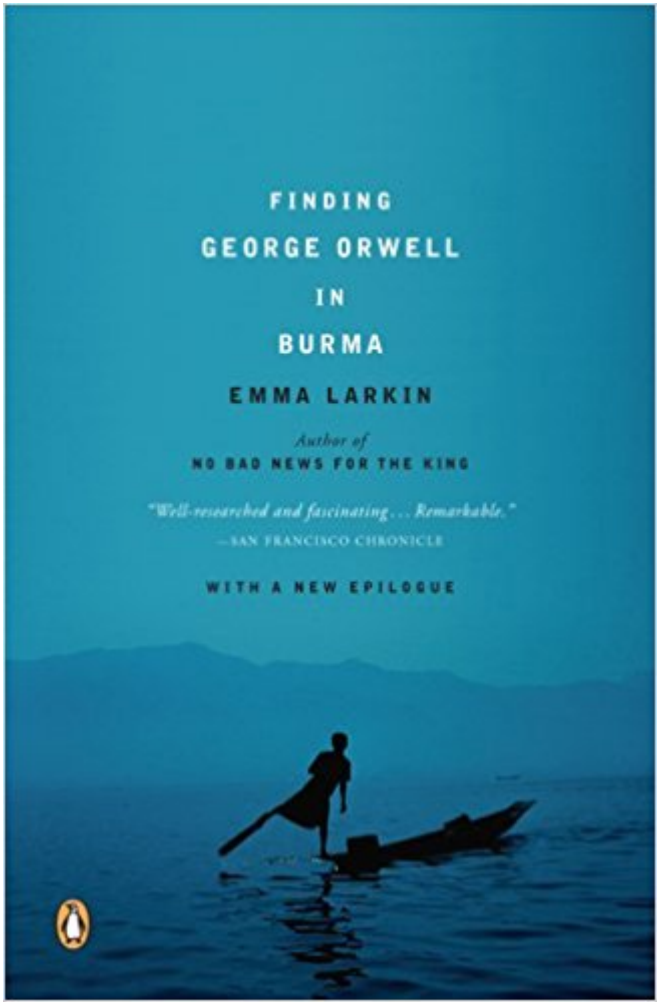
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Finding George Orwell In Burma



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Synopsis

A fascinating political travelogue that traces the life and work of George Orwell, author of 1984 and ANIMAL FARM, in Southeast Asia Over the years the American writer Emma Larkin has spent traveling in Burma, also known as Myanmar, she’s come to know all too well the many ways this brutal police state can be described as "Orwellian." The life of the mind exists in a state of siege in Burma, and it long has. But Burma’s connection to George Orwell is not merely metaphorical; it is much deeper and more real. Orwell’s mother was born in Burma, at the height of the British raj, and Orwell was fundamentally shaped by his experiences in Burma as a young man working for the British Imperial Police. When Orwell died, the novel-in-progress on his desk was set in Burma. It is the place George Orwell’s work holds in Burma today, however, that most struck Emma Larkin. She was frequently told by Burmese acquaintances that Orwell did not write one book about their country - his first novel, Burmese Days - but in fact he wrote three, the "trilogy" that included Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four. When Larkin quietly asked one Burmese intellectual if he knew the work of George Orwell, he stared blankly for a moment and then said, "Ah, you mean the prophet!" In one of the most intrepid political travelogues in recent memory, Emma Larkin tells of the year she spent traveling through Burma using the life and work of George Orwell as her compass. Going from Mandalay and Rangoon to poor delta backwaters and up to the old hill-station towns in the mountains of Burma’s far north, Larkin visits the places where Orwell worked and lived, and the places his books live still. She brings to vivid life a country and a people cut off from the rest of the world, and from one another, by the ruling military junta and its vast network of spies and informers. Using Orwell enables her to show, effortlessly, the weight of the colonial experience on Burma today, the ghosts of which are invisible and everywhere. More important, she finds that the path she charts leads her to the people who have found ways to somehow resist the soul-crushing effects of life in this most cruel police state. And George Orwell’s moral clarity, hatred of injustice, and keen powers of observation serve as the author’s compass in another sense too: they are qualities she shares and they suffuse her book - the keenest and finest reckoning with life in this police state that has yet been written.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The author, an American journalist fluent in Burmese, writing under a pseudonym, notes that there's a joke in Burma (now Myanmar) that Orwell wrote not one novel about the country, but three: Burmese Days, Animal Farm and 1984. The first takes place during the British colonial days, while the latter two, Larkin argues, more closely reflect the situation there today. " 'Truth is true only within a certain period of time,' " she quotes a regime spokesman saying after a 1988 uprising. " 'What was truth once may no longer be truth after many months or years.' " Indeed, providing an accurate representation of Burmese life proves daunting, as Larkin encounters a nation bristling with informants and paranoia. Her language skills, however, allow her to glean information and mingle with the country's reserved and cautious intelligentsia. In addition to Larkin's depiction of the political landscape, the book also features wonderfully vibrant descriptions of the land and people. Larkin's prose is striking and understated, and she allows the people she meets to speak their parts without editorializing. In this way, she comes across not as an idealist but rather as an inquisitive and trustworthy guide to the underlying reality of a country whose leaders would rather have outsiders focus only on their carefully constructed veneer. "All you had to do, it seemed," Larkin writes, "was scratch the surface of one of the town's smiling residents and you would find bitterness or tears." Her efforts have resulted in a lucid and insightful illustration of truly Orwellian circumstances. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Larkin (a pseudonym), an American journalist based in Bangkok, believes that it was George Orwell's stint as an imperial policeman in British-ruled Burma during the 1920s that turned him into a writer of conscience. To prove her theory and assess what imprint if any he left on the culture, she bravely journeyed throughout the now brutally totalitarian state to visit the places Orwell lived and worked. A meticulous observer, she captures the masked spirit of a people monitored by military

spies and constantly threatened with incarceration and torture. As her risky conversations with Burmese intellectuals, writers, teashop waiters, and students reveal, censorship is severe, yet Burma remains a profoundly literary country as people harbor secret libraries and talk passionately about books. Writing with admirable suppleness and understatement, Larkin reports that Orwell is known as a prophet in Burma, so closely do Animal Farm and 1984 reflect what has happened in this beautiful yet tragically oppressed land. Her quest for the past illuminates the grim present in this true-life Orwellian world. Donna SeamanCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I've been a frequent visitor to Myanmar for the past 5 years, and have watched with interest its transition from the country Emma Larkin has described to one that is now catching up with the region around it. It's a beautiful and fascinating place. I also finally got around to reading Orwell's Burmese Days, and I can understand Ms Larkin's effective approach of interweaving this view of a world long gone, but not very pleasant when it existed, with Orwell's other two almost written for Burma-as-was books - 1984 and Animal Farm. She also relates Orwell to specific places in Myanmar, many of which I've visited, or will visit now that I know the Orwell connection. While her characters, the people she interviews, are almost all opposed to the military government, this probably reflects several facts that would have been relevant when she wrote the book: most of the population probably opposed the government at the time (as the recent elections seem to have confirmed), she was working more or less incognito, although apparently followed at almost every step by the Military Intelligence agencies, and the government did not interact with authors or journalists.

This is a well written beautiful book. I loved this book! The author used George Orwell's writings about Burma as a canvas to her present-day travels in the same country, now known as Myanmar. Having read George Orwell other books, I really appreciate this book. Even if you haven't read any of Orwell's other books, you will still come away with a grand new appreciation for how people cope living under dictatorship. Go read it!

This book has more than met my expectations - it has exceeded them. Emma Larkin has done her research. And she did it before she went to Burma. She has looked at the full Burmese experience, from the standpoints of the ordinary Burmese, the victims of violence perpetrated by the brutal military junta, the equally-brutal British empire, and before, to the (British) bureaucrats who ran the

country in Orwell’s time and until they packed up and left, as well as that of a visiting foreigner.Rarely does one come across a better-written travelogue, so well researched, so rich in detail, so descriptive of experiences, and so complete in the space it took to write in it. Hats off to Ms. Larkin.

This is a very useful and informative narrative for anyone interested in George Orwell or his ideas. The authors ability to define Orwell’s Burma experiences and put them in to context is done extremely well. Modern Burma is the definition of Orwell’s fears of a government out of control ruthlessly oppressive. The authors courage traveling Burma and documenting The relationship between Orwell and the people there is a great achievemennt. I really enjoyed this book and highly recommend it.

i loved it! while traveling in burma... it’s nice this about kindle and one click purchases... you can search about the subject you’re living in. and who doesn’t like orwell? and burma? just nice to read about the ’back the scenes’ of the life of the great orwell!

The author explored many paths that I had and many more that I could not, so her narrative carried me on the latter with a riveting, cross-cultural perspective of George Orwell. There were fascinating descriptions and historical perspective from a brave traveler indeed. Reading the book made me want to retrace her steps as well as my own. If I do, then perhaps I will rewrite my own novel about Burmese days.

Emma Larkin (not her real name) went to Burma to follow, kind of, in the footsteps of George Orwell (not his real name). How did being stationed as a police officer in Burma shape his future? How was being part of the machinery of the state change the person he was into the author he became? How much of Burma is in Anaimal Farm, 1984, and other stories by him?I learned ALOT about George Orwell’s early life and was, frankly, kind of shocked to learn about how well, sometimes, he fit in with the rest of the Imperialists. Or was he just pretending to fit in?Many details of her search, such as names of people, had to be changed. And I am sure she had to hold back a lot of information to protect people, even after changing their names, but it did feel a tad dangerous to even print the book. After all, if the government KNEW where she was at all times, could they not use that data, the times, the places, the areas she was in to track down the people she interviewed? Kind of scary.While I would suggest reading Gorge Orwell’s works I would also check outÃ Â Burma

ChroniclesÃ Â which gives you another report about life in Burma. In graphic form.

While preparing to take an extensive trip to Myanmar this past year I acquired a number of current and Classic books on Burma to get the lay of the land. George Orwell's masterpiece brought to life the world of English ExPats in colonial Burma under the British rule. The detail of the lives of foreigners living in a place and time rapidly changing beneath their feet made my imagination run wild. There are lessons to be learned from Orwell that naive neo colonialists and political scientists should study about life among folks not quite like you.A powerful look at people and communities.

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