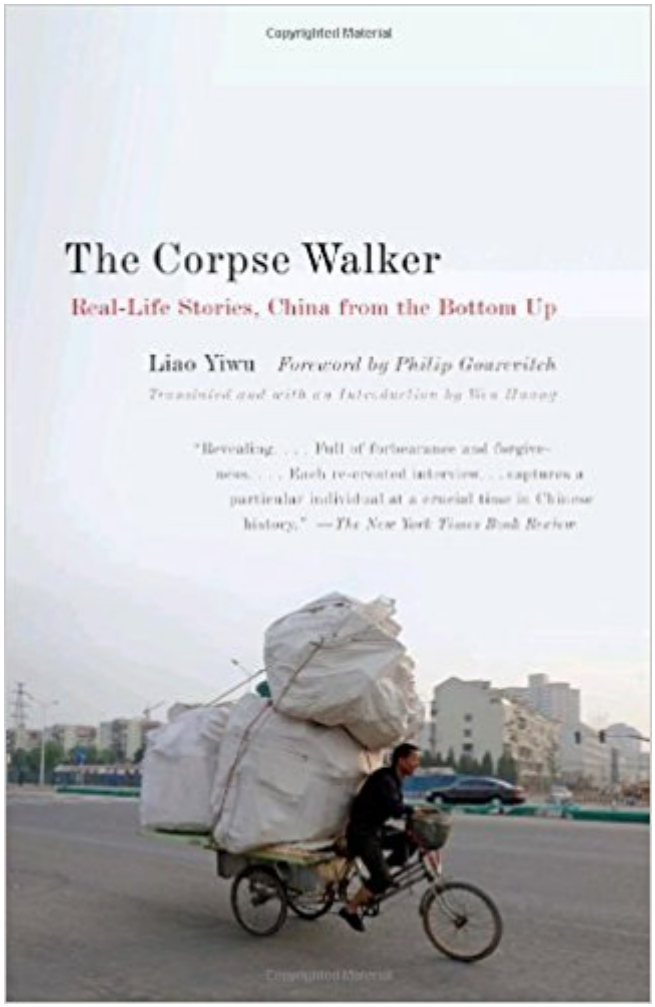
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The Corpse Walker: Real Life Stories: China From The Bottom Up



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Synopsis

The Corpse Walker introduces us to regular men and women at the bottom of Chinese society, most of whom have been battered by life but have managed to retain their dignity: a professional mourner, a human trafficker, a public toilet manager, a leper, a grave robber, and a Falung Gong practitioner, among others. By asking challenging questions with respect and empathy, Liao Yiwu managed to get his subjects to talk openly and sometimes hilariously about their lives, desires, and vulnerabilities, creating a book that is an instance par excellence of what was once upon a time called Ã¢â ¬Å“The New Journalism.Ã¢â ¬Â• The Corpse Walker reveals a fascinating aspect of modern China, describing the lives of normal Chinese citizens in ways that constantly provoke and surprise.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this rich, often harrowing oral history, Chinese writer (and notorious target of censors) Liao travels to the margins of Chinese society, interviewing 27 outsiders from China's forgotten classes. The book contains an incredible cast of characters: a grave robber, a composer, a leper, a professional mourner paid to wail at funerals, a human trafficker and a delusional peasant who has anointed himself emperor. These conversations, largely recorded from memory, showcase Liao's empathy for his subjects and a particular talent for getting into tight situations; on one occasion, the author is forced to leap out of a three-story building when he fears the Communist government is targeting him for talking to a Falun Gong supporter. Liao's research took 11 years,

and his final product is a stunning series of portraits of a generation and class of individuals ignored in history books and unacknowledged in the accounts of the new China. (Apr.) 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.

Poet and novelist Liao, imprisoned for four years by the Chinese government for his poem condemning the massacre at Tiananmen Square, offers intimate portraits of ordinary people in China. Using interviews with hundreds of villagers whose lives have not benefited from the astounding economic growth of the new China, he offers oral histories of their lives lived day to day. Among his interview subjects are professional mourners, a former Red Guard, a trafficker in women, a grave robber, and a former political prisoner. Liao talked to people in villages where traditions have changed little as well as those where the old ways have clashed with the Revolution. A man recounts how fear of leprosy and evil dragons prompted villagers to burn his wife alive. The shocked husband was then obligated to feed them at a festival afterward. A retired government official recounts the hardships during the Cultural Revolution, the passion of the villagers and the hypocrisy of leaders, and the need for an honest assessment and apology. Liao offers rich detail about people who live well outside the spotlight trained on China. --Vanessa Bush --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Fascinating book ! China as it its and as it was through the words and eyes of Chinese people who experienced it in its most brutal and aberrant historical way. The interview conducted by a Chinese Author, who himself had to suffer through the same historical period and can understand,- please don’t skip the foreword and introduction - makes it much closer to the reality of it all. I am reading a lot of books on China and this one gives more depth to the general education I am receiving on the subject as I go. I don’t think that I would have started with this one though and would have been able to continue reading without being prepared by other books. After a general concept through other books I can confront the reality of this one better. It is amazing to realize the resilience of Chinese people and of individuals who, I had no idea, could survive under such harsh conditions even though I had heard 1st hand all kind of 2nd World War European stories. I could not put this book away. IT IS HISTORY !

I LOVED this book! It’s one of my favorites still. The short vignettes of the individuals highlighted in the book were fascinating and riveting - illustrating a time where tradition perseveres despite

structural oppression.

This is a fascinating and engrossing book that provides 27 glimpses into lives that have not faired so well in China. The author, Liao Yiwu, is a poet who has drawn upon his own life to conduct interviews with people from the bottom of society. This extremely well-done English translation draws upon 27 interviews from the 60 in the original Chinese book. The people range from the occupation from which the book draws the title - an ancient method of transporting dead bodies for burial - to a 103 year-old Buddhist abbot to a rest room manager to a blind street erhu player. Liao is by no means an objective interviewer; he does not let the Human Trafficker (already in jail) of easily. Each chapter is titled by the role or occupation of the interviewee. These are people who have suffered under the various deprivations of revolutionary communism, the cultural revolution, or the newest era of capitalist communism. Liao brings a harsh light to many of the sufferings of the past. However, despite the accumulated human misery, this is not a depressing book. Many of the people interviewed, as the original Chinese title describes "Interviews with People from the Bottom Rung of Society", are not the wildly successful, they often have come to accept their lot in life, and they have a quiet dignity the perfuses their words. I would highly recommend this to anyone who wants to see a very different view of life in China.

An engrossing and powerful expose of Communist China in the words of people who have suffered its indignities, tortures and inhumanity, as rendered by a poet imprisoned for publishing a poem about the Tiananmen Square killings. Liao Yiwu’s interviews with men and women from across Chinese society--from a safecracker to a village teacher to a neighborhood committee director to a former Red Guard--reveal the hardships, sorrows, depravities and generosities of a people beset by almost incredible punishments, dished out by both Man and Fate. Though not for the squeamish, Liao laces the interviews, conducted over a span of years, with tough humor and a scolding morality--such as when he tells one interviewee, "You are such a jerk." Highly recommended.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The author interviews various people, and they tell their stories. It’s very eye-opening. Though I have heard stories about the chinese government, before I read this book I had little idea how horrible that government actually is. For those of you who find books like "Mao" (by Chang and Halliday) too daunting, this might be more your speed. Easy to read but not dumbed down, and very informative.

I have a special interest in China and its Cultural Revolution. For this reason, I found the book very interesting. I wondered if some of the stories have been embellished. Also, the author translated a lot of the descriptions and conversations into "street English" so one sometimes had the feeling that it was taking place in urban North America. Overall, the book does a good job at revealing the trials and tribulations of the Chinese populace during this tragic segment of their history.

Each story is only like 15-20 pages, dialogue style. Really easy to pop one or two interviews a night or at lunch. They're very very interesting interviews. I spent some time traveling around the country and I wish I could've gotten a more in-depth look at the country rather than just as an outsider, and this book really gave me some insight.

It was beautifully written. The interviews allowed the author to portray the Cultural Revolution in arevealing and frightening way. For those of us who toured China post Mao days, it presents information that fills in pre-Olympic travel experiences.

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