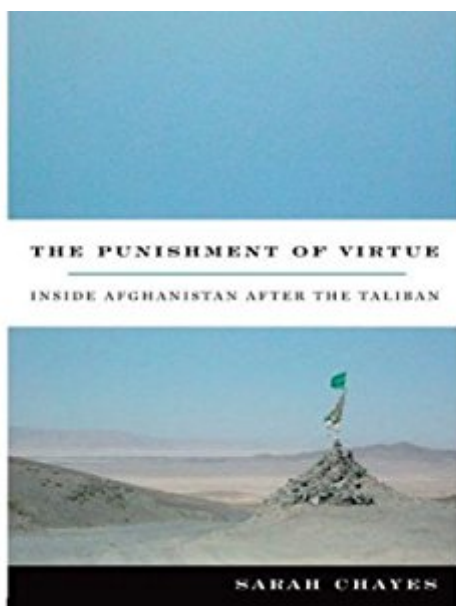


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The Punishment Of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After The Taliban



Synopsis

A National Public Radio reporter covering the last stand of the Taliban in their home base of Kandahar in Afghanistan's southern borderland, Sarah Chayes became deeply immersed in the unfolding drama of the attempt to rebuild a broken nation at the crossroads of the world's destiny. Her NPR tour up in early 2002, she left reporting to help turn the country's fortunes, accepting a job running a nonprofit founded by President Hamid Karzai's brother. With remarkable access to leading players in the postwar government, Chayes witnessed a tragic story unfold—the perverse turn of events whereby the U.S. government and armed forces allowed and abetted the return to power of corrupt militia commanders to the country, as well as the reinfiltration of bands of Taliban forces supported by U.S. ally Pakistan. In this gripping and dramatic account of her four years on the ground, working with Afghans in the battle to restore their country to order and establish democracy, Chayes opens Americans' eyes to the sobering realities of this vital front in the war on terror. She forged unparalleled relationships with the Karzai family, tribal leaders, U.S. military and diplomatic brass, and such leading figures in the Kandahar government as the imposing and highly effective chief of police—an incorruptible supporter of the Karzai regime whose brutal assassination in June 2005 serves as the opening of the book. Chayes lived in an Afghan home, gaining rich insights into the country's culture and politics and researching the history of Afghanistan's legendary resistance to foreign interference. She takes us into meetings with Hamid Karzai and the corrupt Kandahar governor, Gul Agha Shirzai, into the homes of tribal elders and onto the U.S. military base. Unveiling the complexities and traumas of Afghanistan's postwar struggles, she reveals how the tribal strongmen who have regained power—after years of being displaced by the Taliban—have visited a renewed plague of corruption and violence on the Afghan people, under the complicit eyes of U.S. forces and officials. The story Chayes tells is a powerful, disturbing revelation of misguided U.S. policy and of the deeply entrenched traditions of tribal warlordism that have ruled Afghanistan through the centuries. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If like me you are a fiction maven who is likely to read only a couple of nonfiction books each year, do yourself the favor of making this year's pick "The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban." Here's why: How often do you get to read a book by an author who is an accomplished historian, political analyst, humanitarian, philosopher, psychologist, and anthropologist - all rolled into one masterful storyteller? Indeed, Sarah Chayes is a gifted writer whose lucid and exciting prose radiates such originality that it simply could not have been crafted by anybody else. Part memoir, part murder mystery, part history text, and part reportage with commentary on the politically charged process of nation building, this book invites readers along on a treacherous but extraordinary journey toward the creation of democracy in a country that for the past few decades has been ravaged by war, corruption, and brutal regimes. Ms. Chayes chose to remain in Kandahar after reporting for NPR on the fall of the Taliban there because she believed that the only way to reverse forces that conspired to create 9/11 and other similarly heinous events was to "get this right." And so, in an urgent act of faith and bravery, she traipsed across the globe, alone, to help run Afghans for Civil Society - an NGO founded by a previously exiled brother of the U.S. backed interim President Hamid Karzai. After many months of tireless work under harsh conditions, the narrative tone shifts from idealistic and hopeful, to wary of a new government that relinquishes power to duplicitous warlords, to deep skepticism, to abject disillusionment, to a more personal and ultimate decision to persevere in the face of unyielding obstacles.

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