



The Sutras of Abu Ghraib: Notes from a Conscientious Objector in Iraq

Aiden Delgado

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The Sutras of Abu Ghraib is the story of a soldier who refused to succumb to violence. In chronicling the struggles of military life and the dehumanizing effects of war, Aiden Delgado examines the attitudes that make prisoner abuse possible and explores his own developing Buddhist beliefs against a brutal backdrop. It is a tale of physical bravery, moral courage, and the cost of holding on to your identity while everyone around you is losing theirs.

The son of a diplomat, Delgado grew up in various countries, including Thailand, where he was introduced to Buddhism, and Egypt, where he learned Arabic. In 2001, after his first year of college, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve, and in 2003 he was deployed as a specialist in Nasiriyah and at Abu Ghraib. When his colleagues learned that he spoke some Arabic and enjoyed meeting Iraqis, they made use of him but also began to mistrust him. As Delgado witnessed more and more American racism, arrogance, and abuse of unarmed Iraqis, his opposition mounted. Concluding that war ran counter to his Buddhist principles, he sought conscientious objector status and, after finishing his tour of duty, was honorably discharged. The following year, Bob Herbert wrote in the *New York Times*, "The public at large and especially the many soldiers who have behaved honorably in Iraq deserve an honest answer . . . Mr. Delgado's complaints and the entire conduct of this wretched war should be thoroughly investigated."

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