



Living in Romantic Baghdad: An American Memoir of Teaching and Travel in Iraq, 1924-1947 (Contemporary Issues in the Middle East)

Ida Donges Staudt

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In 1924, an adventurous young couple accepted a commission to open an American school for boys in Baghdad. Setting foot on Iraqi soil the very day that the Constituent Assembly convened in Baghdad to frame a constitution for the new nation, Ida Staudt and her husband Calvin witnessed the birth of this fledgling country. For the next twenty-three years, they taught hundreds of young boys whose ethnicity, religious background, and economic status was as varied as the region itself. Cultivating strong bonds with their students and their families, the Staudts were welcomed into their lives and homes, ranging from the royal palace to refugee huts and Bedouin tents.

In her captivating memoir, Staudt skillfully interweaves the political and historical setting with personal anecdotes, recalling the people she encountered and the places she explored. With vivid descriptions, she relates the complexities of the people, the grandeur of the antiquities, and the beauty of the region's topography. Living in Romantic Baghdad evokes the city, the villages, and the communities of Iraq, capturing a unique chapter in modern Iraqi history, one marked by pluralism and tolerance, and putting a human face on a largely misunderstood country.



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