

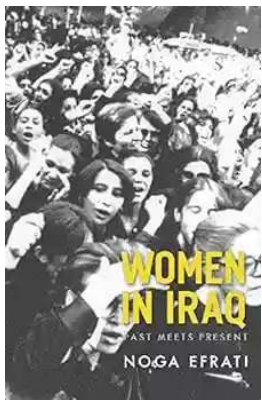
Women in Iraq: Past Meets Present

Throughout history, women in Iraq have played significant roles, their contributions dating back to ancient civilizations. From shaping cultures to influencing politics, the women of Iraq have left an indelible mark on the nation's history. This article explores the journey of women in Iraq, from their historical achievements to their present-day struggles and triumphs.

The Role of Women in Ancient Mesopotamia

The region known today as Iraq was once home to ancient Mesopotamia, a cradle of civilization and a melting pot of cultures. Women in Mesopotamia enjoyed a relatively high status compared to their counterparts in other ancient societies. They had legal rights, could own property, engage in the political arena, and pursue education.

Some of the most prominent historical figures from that era were women, such as Enheduanna, a high priestess and the earliest known author in history. Her hymns and poems have survived thousands of years and reveal a glimpse into the literary prowess of Mesopotamian women.



Women in Iraq: Past Meets Present

by Noga Efrati(Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported

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The Shift in Women's Rights

Over time, external influences and changes in political and social structures affected the position of women in Iraq. Islamic principles and traditions, introduced with the rise of Islam in the 7th century, played a significant role in shaping societal norms regarding women's roles and responsibilities. While women still had certain rights in public and private spheres, their influence in society gradually diminished.

However, it is important to note that Iraq has always had exceptional women who challenged societal norms and fought for equal rights. One such example is Safia Jawad, a prominent feminist and activist who fought for women's rights in the early 20th century.

Women in Modern Iraq

The 20th century witnessed significant changes in the status of women in Iraq. With the establishment of the Iraqi state, numerous women started entering academia, politics, and various professional fields. Women gained the right to vote in 1980, marking a significant milestone.

However, several challenges persisted due to political instability and conflicts faced by the nation. The Iran-Iraq War, Gulf War, and subsequent conflicts deeply affected women's lives, increased poverty rates, and limited their access to education and healthcare.

The Resilience of Women in Iraq Today

Despite the challenges faced by Iraqi women, they continue to showcase incredible resilience, determination, and strength. With the help of local and international organizations, women are working towards rebuilding their lives and reclaiming their rights.

Organizations like the Iraqi Women's League and the Iraqi Women's Network provide support to women by offering education programs, promoting women's entrepreneurship, and advocating for equal rights. Through their initiatives, these organizations are empowering women, giving them a voice, and promoting gender equality in Iraq.

Challenges Ahead

While progress has been made, there are still significant challenges that women in Iraq face today. Traditional patriarchal values, religious extremism, and violence against women continue to hamper gender equality efforts.

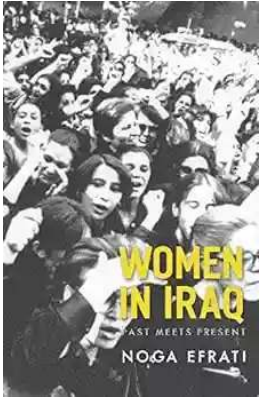
Furthermore, the displacement brought about by the conflict with the Islamic State has disproportionately affected women, placing them at greater risk of exploitation, trafficking, and displacement.

A Glimpse of Hope

Despite the obstacles, there have been positive developments that offer hope for the future. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women participating in politics. By breaking the barriers and assuming key political positions, such as ministers and parliament members, women are working to shape Iraq's future and ensure equal representation for all.

Women in Iraq have a rich historical legacy and continue to shape the nation's current trajectory. From their influential roles in ancient civilizations to their

resilience in the face of adversity, Iraqi women have made significant contributions to society. While challenges remain, organizations and individuals are working tirelessly towards gender equality, empowering Iraqi women, and fostering an inclusive future for all.



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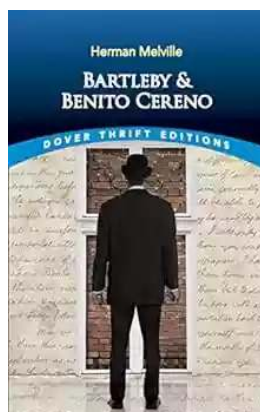
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Noga Efrati outlines the first social and political history of women in Iraq during the periods of British occupation and the British-backed Hashimite monarchy (1917–1958). She traces the harsh and long-lasting implications of British state building on Iraqi women, particularly their legal and political enshrinement as second-class citizens, and the struggle by women's rights activists to counter this precedent. Efrati concludes with a discussion of post-Saddam Iraq and the women's associations now claiming their place in government. Finding common threads between these two generations of women, Efrati underscores the organic roots of the current fight for gender equality shaped by a memory of oppression under the monarchy.

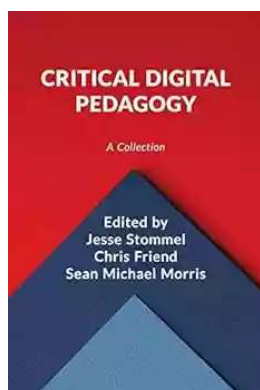
Efrati revisits the British strategy of efficient rule, largely adopted by the Iraqi government they erected and the consequent gender policy that emerged. The attempt to control Iraq through "authentic leaders"—giving them legal and political

powers—marginalized the interests of women and virtually sacrificed their well-being altogether. Iraqi women refused to resign themselves to this fate. From the state's early days, they drew attention to the biases of the Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation (TCCDR) and the absence of state intervention in matters of personal status and resisted women's disenfranchisement. Following the coup of 1958, their criticism helped precipitate the dissolution of the TCCDR and the ratification of the Personal Status Law. A new government gender discourse shaped by these past battles arose, yet the U.S.-led invasion of 2003, rather than helping cement women's rights into law, reinstated the British approach. Pressured to secure order and reestablish a pro-Western Iraq, the Americans increasingly turned to the country's "authentic leaders" to maintain control while continuing to marginalize women. Efrati considers Iraqi women's efforts to preserve the progress they have made, utterly defeating the notion that they have been passive witnesses to history.



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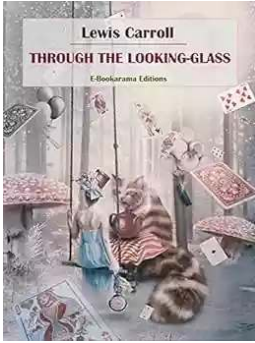
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