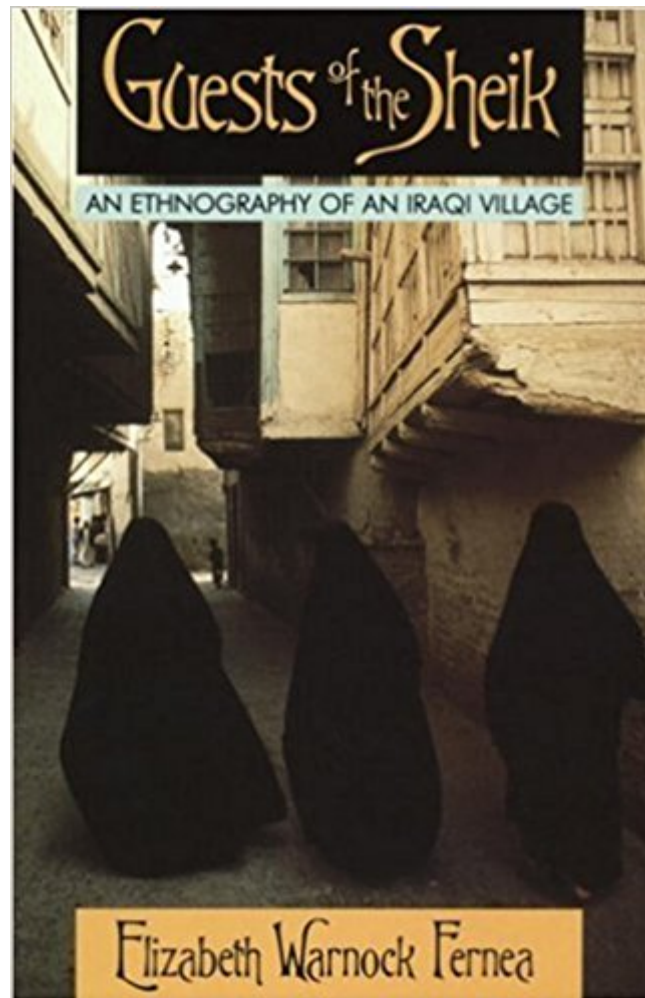




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Guests Of The Sheik: An Ethnography Of An Iraqi Village



Synopsis

A delightful, well-written, and vastly informative ethnographic study, this is an account of Fernea's two-year stay in a tiny rural village in Iraq, where she assumed the dress and sheltered life of a harem woman. This volume gives a unique insight into a part of the Middle Eastern life seldom seen by the West. "A most enjoyable book about [Muslim women]--simple, dignified, human, colorful, sad and humble as the life they lead." --Muhsin Mahdi, Jewett Professor of Arabic Literature, Harvard University.

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Customer Reviews

There are 800 million Muslims in the world today, yet Islam is one of the world's least understood and appreciated religions. The culture of Islamic women and the mystery of a veiled society have endured any number of uninformed or hostile interpretations. Elizabeth Warnock Fernea spent the first two years of her marriage in the 1950s living in El Nahra, a small village in Southern Iraq, and her book is a personal narrative about life behind a veil in a community unaccustomed to Western women. She arrived speaking only a few words of Arabic and feeling dubious about her husband's expectation that she adapt completely to the segregated society in order to accommodate his anthropological study. When she left two years later she was an accepted and loved member of the village, inspired for a lifetime of work in Middle Eastern studies. The story of her life among the Iraqis is eye-opening, written with intellectual honesty as well as love and respect for a seemingly impenetrable society. Although the book was originally published in 1965, it surfaced again during the Gulf War in 1991 when many small villages were destroyed in Southern Iraq. This book gives

readers a fuller sense of those communities and brings home the cost of war waged against civilians. -- For great reviews of books for girls, check out Let's Hear It for the Girls: 375 Great Books for Readers 2-14. -- From 500 Great Books by Women; review by Rebecca Sullivan

A delightful, well-written, and vastly informative ethnographic study, this is an account of Fernea's two-year stay in a tiny rural village in Iraq, where she assumed the dress and sheltered life of a harem woman.

What a fabulous book about 1950's life in Iraq as a woman and what they faced and what their lives were like - many were so happy in their sheltered existences as part of the Sheik's "family". Truly an eye opening narrative. Highly recommend. I wonder if much has changed.

This is a great look at 1950s, rural, female, Iraqi culture. It was fascinating to read about a time and culture so different. The author actually lived in a rural community in Iraq for years so she thoroughly learned about the village lifestyle, and expectations of women in various levels of social interactions--home, family, community. It's a story about her experience and is in no way "text-bookish," which made it an easy read. I also appreciate the author's respectful tone and willingness to learn with little negative judgment about cultural differences.

I bought this book for an Anthropology course, but it is one that I won't be selling at the end of the year. Fernea is an engaging writer and despite this being an assigned reading, I found myself reading ahead. Fernea spent nearly two year living with the women of the Iraqi village and she learned much about them and their lives in the time period. However, her ethnography is not a dry description of what she learned. Instead, she presents that information through a series of anecdotes that tell about their lives and her struggle to fit into their lifestyle.

I had to read this book for a cultural anthropolgy class, and I really enjoyed it! It is well written and easy to read, and provides a fascinating look at Iraqi village culture in the 1950s. Fernea writes an interesting account of her experiences, and although it is not always a terribly scientific look at society, it is still a valuable resource. Fernea got to see many things that male anthropologists of the time were not allowed to see, and explains the social norms and interactions very well. Overall, a great, easy read for a weekend.

This book is fantastic! With developing interests in the middle East due to conflicts and cultural exchanges, this book is a must read. With my interest in culture and in Islam I found this book to be great and illuminating. This woman is very unbiased and descriptive and really makes you feel like you are living in the hut with her and her husband as they have all of these experiences. This text was a requirement for an anthropology course in college and it's a great text!

This is my second copy of this book. The author writes about her and her husbands' experiences for two years in Iraq as a newly married Americans. In order to help her husband with his doctorate, she agreed to live in purdah, wear the abayah, and record her experiences with the women. I believe she was faithful to relating her time there; her writing style is gentle and humorous, giving great insight to her relationships with the women she befriended there. I highly recommend.

Very interesting book that takes you back in time to another place to learn their culture. The first-hand account is told in a compelling manner and I read it in a couple of days.

I had to read this book for my middle eastern anthropology class...This is a good ethnography about her stay in the middle east. I can't say it's timeless because it was set so long ago. Although it did relate to their beliefs today. I'm glad I got to read it and received an A on my term paper...so that's always a good thing. :)

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