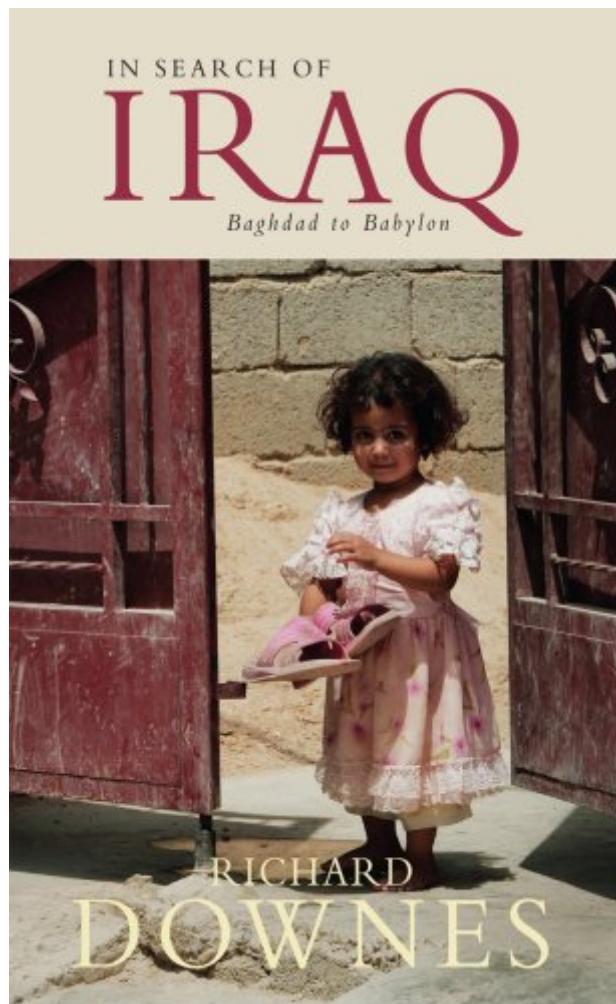


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In Search Of Iraq: Baghdad To Babylon



Synopsis

"One of the best books to come out of the coverage of Iraq. A beautifully written personal memoir [possessing] a startling writing capacity." Village From 1998 until the chaotic aftermath of the invasion, news reporter Richard Downes witnessed firsthand the incredible changes that have overwhelmed the Iraqi people. In Search of Iraq goes far deeper into the environment than the daily news reports seen by the Western World. Small events of ordinary life and whispered conversations in back alleys are as telling as the grand political statements. With an unflinching focus on the customs, religion, culture and historical diversity of all the communities in the region, Richard Downes reveals the true horror and impact of war, as well as the friendships that can blossom in a country torn to shreds. What emerges is a stunning memorial to a disintegrating nation. Nominated for the Irish Best Book of the Year in 2007, this important new American edition previews what will emerge in the wake of the Surge, after the American elections and beyond the US withdrawal. Downes reports on a situation that puts Kurdistan, in particular, in jeopardy. Iraq's northern province has been largely free of the violence and chaos that marked the rest of the country. Now Downes finds the Kurds lost in a sea of contradictions. They provide the President and foreign minister of Iraq and yet have no intention of supporting the state. They denounce the terrorism in their beloved city of Kirkuk and in Mosul and yet offer safe haven for attacks launched at Turkey. These contradictions are compounded by a vicious and secret proxy war that is being conducted on the Kurdish Iranian border. U.S. forces and the Iranian army are fighting an unreported war directly across this inhospitable frontier. Through the eyes of the reporter's friend and university lecturer, the swirling emotions of post-war Iraq are profound. While the Kurds have done best of all the Iraqi groups, they fear being abandoned, and suspect the Americans have done deals that will leave the Kurds high and dry. Downes returns again and again to his friends and colleagues and with persistence, cunning, and not a small amount of risk, shows the realities of life today in Iraq and what presages the future. Richard Downes is a journalist living in Dublin. After working in the financial press, he joined the BBC where he worked for a decade. For three and a half years he crossed the African continent covering wars, insurrections and catastrophes. His BBC posting Jordan brought him to the Mideast in 1998, and he subsequently found his niche in Iraq. Isolated through international sanctions, Iraq and its people captivated him. Vincent Browne described him as "the best reporter covering the war." He has continued to travel to Iraq in the chaotic post-war era.

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