

Weaving Tradition and Modernity Bedouin Women in Higher Education

The Centre for Bedouin Studies & Development Research Unit
Center for Regional Development
ISBN 965-72-11-23-9

Co-Authors: Kathleen Abu-Saad, Tamar Horowitz, Ismael Abu-Saad

Review by: Dr. Linitā Manu'atu
Senior Lecturer in Education
Auckland University of Technology
Auckland 1020
New Zealand
www.aut.ac.nz

5 June 2008

The book, *Weaving Tradition and Modernity* is a 'must read', to hear the inside stories of the Bedouin Arab community through the 'voices' of the Bedouin women who study at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. The book presents stories told by Bedouin women in higher education about their lived experiences in the land that they claim to belong to, yet, their language, values, beliefs, histories, and politics are marginalized and, the tough economic conditions deprive them of their humanity and rights. As a reader from the South Pacific my heart is disturbed by the intensity of the troubles in the very homeland of the biblical stories that are revered by the Pacific Peoples who are Christians on the other side of the world. The stories told in this book are true experiences of the Palestinians in the twenty first century and they provide another side of the context of the 'Holy Land' as the Christian Pacific Peoples have come to know. Much insight is offered about the conflicting and disputed historical narratives regarding land ownership when stories are lamented by the university students of the Negev.

The main issue of the unrecognized villages lies in the power of the land and the book offers university education as a tool for the transformation of the marginalized position imposed upon the Bedouin Arabs in the Negev. Educating the female Bedouin students in the university is a political act and the regime that produces and shapes the educational opportunities for them, their families and the community is challenged in the book. Taking a cue from the experiences of the university students, the book provides a sound base for new analyses of the political and economic situation in the Negev. The inadequate physical resources of the unrecognized villages are unfolded by the stories and the book sends a powerful message to the world about the oppressive, dominant regime of the state of Israel over the Bedouin Arab community.

A strength of the book is in the way it weaves the tensions between the mainstream Jewish culture and the Arab traditions through the stories of the young women. It presents the 'voices' of the women and their experiences to highlight the complexities of the issues in educating the Bedouin Arab women and communal living in Israel. The

findings are well written as the words are from the hearts and the souls of women who are struggled intensely and who live in realities that are far-fetched to the imagination. I believe the inhabitants of Third World countries in the South Pacific geographic region can relate to some of these experiences and political condemnation.

Listening with the heart to the voices of the Bedouin women brings tears to my eyes but, like a garden on dry land that awaits the rain so are the mothers and the children of the Negev who, will be delighted when their land is filled with the abundance of peace. Only in peace can they 'weave' together traditions and modernity productively and harmoniously.