

Lila Abu-Lughod studied the Bedouin society in her book *Veiled Sentiments*. She lived among the Bedouins and became a part of their culture for two years studying the interpersonal relationships between the males and females of that culture. In the book, Abu-Lughod brings together the concepts of structure, hierarchy, ideology, and discourse to illustrate the Bedouin culture, and how the Awlad' Ali deal with sentiments. *Veiled Sentiments* is divided into two significant parts, *The Ideology of Bedouin Social Life* and *Discourses on Sentiment*, that come together to better express the culture of the Awlad' Ali, and how they view sentiments.

Abu-Lughod uses part one to describe what she identifies as the ideology of life of the Awlad' Ali. In this particular part of the book, Abu-Lughod discusses the importance of bloodline; she observes that, "blood in the sense of genealogy, is the basis of Awlad' Ali Identity (p.44)." She expresses that kinship marks out each individual's social identity, from ones communal cultural identity to their position in the community as well as their relationship to others. Part one also explains how honor and autonomy are associated with each other, and the fact that not everyone in the community is autonomous or equal to each other. The book suggests that generally, men that are well respected among the Awlad' Ali are more autonomous than the women, children, the poor, and the men that are not respected in the community. Abu-Lughod also details that respect is gained

by living up to the standards of the code of honor that the community has set for its people. By upholding the ideals in the honor code, one gains autonomy which is highly valued among males because "autonomy or freedom is the standard by which status is measured and social hierarchy determined. (p.79)"

When reading *Veiled Sentiments*, I got the impression that the existing social hierarchy among the Awlad' Ali was based on gender, age, wisdom, and wealth, "Women are always dependent," and "...the powerful have obligations and responsibilities to protect and care for the weak. The weaker members epitomized by the helpless infant, and by extension all children. (p.80-81)" Abu-Lughod did a good job depicting the ways that the social hierarchy works, by including terminology such as *wliyya*, and by vividly describing situations where women, and children seemed weaker than the adult males in the community, who in most situations appeared to be the head of households. The author also goes further into the ideals of the Awlad' Ali by discussing the relations between female modesty (*hasham*), "natural inferiority", and sexuality. She depicts the ideal woman in the eyes of the Bedouin people, describing her as soft spoken, and "well-behaved," and with no open thoughts on sexuality. Apart from discussing the importance of *hasham* in a woman, Abu-Lughod points out that emotion of love and affection between men and women is a taboo. Men that show emotion towards a woman are seen to be weak and are shunned upon by their male peers, as well as women in the community. "Women claim, for instance, that "real men" control all their dependents and beat their wives when

the wives do stupid things (p.89)". In many cases, the Awlad' Ali women associated beatings from their husbands as a loving gesture. The author continues her research by observing the meaning of women's veils. She reveals to the reader that women begin to veil when they get married, and sexually active, as a way to cover sexual shame. Women also veil when they are embarrassed about any sexual comments made in their presence. As Abu-Lughod goes further into veiling, the reader can conclude that sexual emotions as well as sentiments aren't received openly among the community. Women that are received as honorable among the Awlad' Ali, are those that completely deny their sexuality. Once more, sexuality is definitely taboo among the Bedouin people, especially for women.

In part two of *Veiled Sentiments*, specifically chapter five through seven, the author supports the theme of her ethnographic research by extensively discussing the ideas and practices of poetic discourse among the Awlad' Ali. Many of the discourses that she talks about involve loss, pride, death, honor, star-crossed love, arranged marriage, divorce, and polygyny. Poetic discourses also known as Ghinnawas, provide an outlet for the expression of real sentiment at the same time allowing the community to preserve its strong sense of identity. One can look at these Ghinnawas as little songs or lyrical poems, " Patience brought no fulfilled wishes, I wearied and hope's door closed... (p.172)" After discussing the importance of discourse, Abu Lughod concludes with an overview of the politics behind sentiment as it relates with ideology. She describes the

social contexts of discourse by explaining why people are allowed to express their sentiments using discourse, and the ways the reasoning behind poetic discourse. She goes on to explain that Ghinnawas are the honorable way of expressing true sentiment in what she calls the protective veil of form. Abu-Lughod then discusses the meaning of the poetry, and how it is portrayed by the intimates of the poet. Finally she gets into more detail with the politics, explaining how Ghinnawas allow individual's to express their sentiments while still protecting their honor as well as the communities' ideals. The author then closes by highlighting the fact that honor is the basis of the Bedouin's ideology and experience. " There is little doubt that the ideology of honor is the dominant or official ideology of Bedouin culture (p. 255)." She then summarizes her research and findings, allowing the reader to form their own opinion on the Bedouin's way of life.

I'd have to say that this was a good read because it had many elements that I find very fascinating. Since writing poetry is one of my hobbies, I was intrigued by the fact that poetry was literally the only way for the Awlad' Ali to express any sentiment. Abu- Lughod in depth research not only intrigued me with its inclusion of sample Ghinnawas, but it also made many of my emotions surface. I found myself disagreeing with much of the Bedouin beliefs, especially the ideals of the honor code and their view on modesty. I was also angered by the fact that the women were extremely dependent on their husbands. The thing that bothered me the most was the way the women related beatings from their husbands to

love. In my opinion, the Bedouin way of life is similar to that of fundamental Islam because of the way women veil themselves, and the social hierarchy that is present in the Bedouin society. All in all, this was definitely an interactive read for me that brought out many of my own emotions and opinions on a societies' way of life. I like the fact that the book was very informative, and written in an basic format, which made the book easier to read.