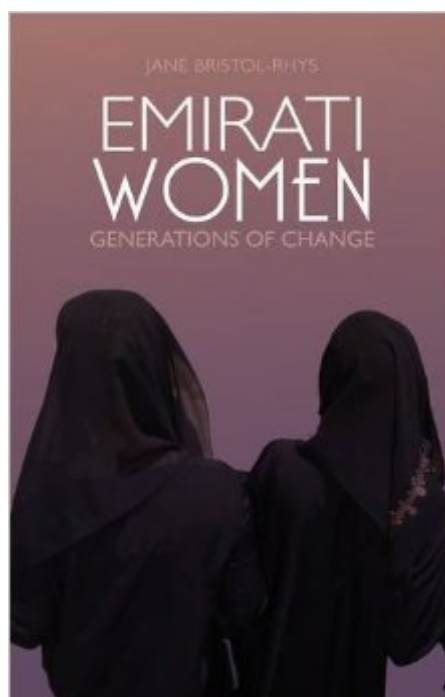


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Emirati Women: Generations Of Change



Synopsis

The discovery of oil in the late 1960s catapulted the people of Abu Dhabi out of the isolating poverty into which it had plunged in the 1930s and onto the global stage. Massive construction projects built the city and infrastructural developments altered the physical and cultural landscape; in a few breathtaking decades, the lives of Emiratis were transformed by new opportunities and a social welfare system that offered free education, medical treatment, generous pensions, subsidies to families, and government incentives offered to citizens to participate in all sectors of the economy. Oil wealth also brought new expectations and new life-styles that are often sophisticated and lavish yet just as often criticized for being conspicuous displays of unbridled consumerism. Emirati Women offers a rare view into the lives of Emirati women and how they perceive the changes that have made poverty a dim and almost forgotten memory. In Emirati Women, Bristol-Rhys weaves together eight years of conversations and interviews with three generations of women, her observations of Emirati society in Abu Dhabi, the unflattering stereotypes commonly heard in the extensive expatriate communities, and discussions with her Emirati university students on topics ranging from marriage, independence, freedom, and the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As its title suggests, this book explores the lives of women who are citizens of the United Arab Emirates. There is very little information on these women in English (or, I suspect, any other language, including Arabic), partly because UAE Nationals are vastly outnumbered in their own

country by expatriates (who make up at least 85% of the country's resident population, according to most estimates), and partly because Emirati women are the segment of the population that is least accessible to foreign observers. As a result, while there has been an increasing number of books lately on the UAE and other Gulf states, few if any have had much to say about Emirati women based on personal access. Jane Bristol-Rhys is to be thanked, therefore, for showing the rest of us a bit of that world. This is not "peek behind the veil" exotica, however. The author is an anthropologist who has lived and worked in the UAE since 2001, and in the Middle East for over two decades. She is a serious scholar and long-time student of the Arab world. At the same time, she has been fortunate to forge close personal friendships with numerous Emirati women. As a result, she brings to her study both a scholar's eye and a confidante's sympathies and knowledge, and she manages to strike a nice balance between the two. The book is both serious and accessible--an enjoyable read that provides both first-hand accounts and scholarly detachment. The overarching theme that connects the various sections of the book is a familiar one: the tension between tradition and modernity. In the case of the UAE, this theme is given a particular edge by the rapidity with which this transition has taken place, and by the massive amount of wealth that has been created in the process, primarily because of oil.

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