



New Waw, Saharan Oasis (Modern Middle East Literature in Translation)

Ibrahim al-Koni

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Winner, National Translation Award, American Literary Translators Association, 2015

Upon the death of their leader, a group of Tuareg, a nomadic Berber community whose traditional homeland is the Sahara Desert, turns to the heir dictated by tribal custom; however, he is a poet reluctant to don the mantle of leadership. Forced by tribal elders to abandon not only his poetry but his love, who is also a poet, he reluctantly serves as leader. Whether by human design or the meddling of the Spirit World, his death inspires his tribe to settle down permanently, abandoning not only nomadism but also the inherited laws of the tribe. The community they found, New Waw, which they name for the mythical paradise of the Tuareg people, is also the setting of Ibrahim al-Koni's companion novel, *The Puppet*.

For al-Koni, this Tuareg tale of the tension between nomadism and settled life represents a choice faced by people everywhere, in many walks of life, as a result of globalism. He sees an inevitable interface between myth and contemporary life.

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