



Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness, and Regeneration in Eastern Sudan (Women in Africa and the Diaspora)

Amal Hassan Fadlalla

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In the Red Sea Hills of eastern Sudan, where poverty, famines, and conflict loom large, women struggle to gain the status of responsible motherhood through bearing and raising healthy children, especially sons. But biological fate can be capricious in impoverished settings. Amidst struggle for survival and expectations of heroic mothering, women face realities that challenge their ability to fulfill their prescribed roles. Even as the effects of modernity and development, global inequities, and exclusionary government policies challenge traditional ways of life in eastern Sudan and throughout many parts of Africa, reproductive traumas—infertility, miscarriage, children’s illnesses, and mortality—disrupt women’s reproductive health and impede their efforts to achieve the status that comes with fertility and motherhood.

In *Embodying Honor* Amal Hassan Fadlalla finds that the female body is the locus of anxieties about foreign dangers and diseases, threats perceived to be disruptive to morality, feminine identities, and social well-being. As a “northern Sudanese” viewed as an outsider in this region of her native country, Fadlalla presents an intimate portrait and thorough analysis that offers an intriguing commentary on the very notion of what constitutes the “foreign.” Fadlalla shows how Muslim Hadendowa women manage health and reproductive suffering in their quest to become “responsible” mothers and valued members of their communities. Her historically grounded ethnography delves into women’s reproductive histories, personal narratives, and ritual logics to reveal the ways in which women challenge cultural understandings of gender, honor, and reproduction.

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