

The Sudanese Woman

Editor, Susan Kenyon^(☆)

The Graduate College of the University of Khartoum decided to publish this collection of essays about women in the Sudan, to mark the end of the United Nations Decade for Women. As the editor, Susan Kenyon, mentions that it is difficult to give a fully representative picture of the population in a country as big and as culturally diverse as Sudan. But this attempt is an important one, especially considering how very little is available on the topic. It should definitely be ordered by all universities and major public libraries interested in women and African material. It is an indispensable reference tool for anyone interested in these topics.

Chapter one is about «Women and Politics in Medieval Sudanese History,» by Hag Hamad Mohammed Kheir. The study is unique because no other historian has yet tackled that topic. A very interesting aspect of this study is about the Queens in Medieval Sudan. Chapter two by Griselda el-Tayi, deals with «Women's Dress in the Northern Sudan». It gives a socio-cultural, historical account of the basic items of dress. Chapter three, about «Food and Differential Roles in the FeticHab Household», by Balghis Yousif Bedri, shows how wives sometimes manipulate unfavourable situations through food to change their husbands' attitude. Chapter four, «Women and Spirit Possession in Omdurman,» by Samia al Hadi al Nagar, looks at how women are involved in zar which is on the increase.

Chapter five, «Women in Sudanese Agriculture,» by Mahasin Khider el Sayed, describes activities of rural women in both traditional and modern forms of agriculture. Chapter six, «Women and Crime in the Sudan,» by Hatim Babiker Abdel Gadir Hillawi, studies the nature of criminality and criminals and how they differ from the men. And finally, chapter seven, «Women and Change in Hmr Oral Traditions,» by Asia Mahjoub Ahmed, part of a larger study of the tradition of a Baggara group, looks at the folk poetry.

All in all, this collection provides us with a deeper understanding of Sudanese society and culture as a whole. ●

(☆) Book review written by Evelynne Accad