

Spaces and Dynamics of Female Practice: Exchange and Marriage in the Sahel, Tunisia

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This study focuses on the activities of the Sahel women in Tunisia that display the production and exchange of things and relationships. These thereby created spaces of social practice are constitutional elements of the social life in the Sahel.

Sahel women work in factories, schools and hospitals, they produce clothes, carpets and food at home and exchange the products of their work in the form of commodities as well as gifts. Moving within various social contexts women constitute different kinds of relationships which are maintained and negotiated in the everyday life and highlighted during ceremonial events that take place on the occasion of birth, marriage and death.

The reference to Islam and Islamic practices pervades the daily and ceremonial life, the Islamic faith is constantly addressed by people. Thus how women practice their faith and how they relate to special forms of pious practices is another important focus of this research.

The study is based on the ethnographic fieldwork in a Tunisian coastal village. Participant observation, interviews and conversations in formal and informal settings are conducted to get involved with and understand the people's perspectives on their daily and ritual practices. The discussion and analysis of the ethnographic data is carried out in reference to anthropological theories about gift exchange and gender in order to contribute to current questions about women's position within Islamic contexts and the interrelationship between male and female social practices.