



Blood, Milk, and Death: Body Symbols and the Power of Regeneration Among the Zaramo of Tanzania

Marja L. Swantz

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Beginning with the myth of origin that joins every young Zaramo woman to her origins as she is initiated into the secrets of life and womanhood, the book then provides us with an historical account of the Tanzanian coast around Dar es Salaam as a background to the persistence of the cultural institutions to which the reader is introduced. Statements and narrations by Salome as a representative of the modern educated Zaramo people intersperse the author's descriptions of the rituals of womanhood, of individual and social healing, and of the ways conflict is symbolically manipulated and managed. Rituals are seen in their vibrant role, not as remnants of tradition, but as means of handling encroaching external pressures on the community. These pressures include, commercialization of livelihood, development thrust in the form of villagization, or the ongoing process of losing land rights. The book shows that a people will counteract the threat of social disintegration by overemphasizing their core values in an attempt to create strong communication forces and instruments of power. A good introduction to contemporary African issues, Third World women's studies, and ethnographic anthropology.

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