

Sacred Spaces, Scarred Bodies: Understanding Forms of and Meanings Associated with Female Circumcision amongst Somali Women in Johannesburg

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Abstract : International migration is associated with a disruption of social environments and social control. At the same time, the reproduction of cultural and social norms in the Diaspora provides a space for the (re)negotiation of gender roles, rights, and practices. This paper explores the relationship between mobility and the practice of female circumcision amongst Somalis in Johannesburg. Based on 4 years of ethnographic fieldwork, this paper explores the social determinants of cultural norms and practices, the linkages between class and tradition, and argues that the new social environment in South Africa conditions the ways in which Somali women relate to their bodies, and therefore understand the meanings associated with and practices of female circumcision.

Keywords : migration, gender, Somali women, female circumcision, Johannesburg

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