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Elizabeth Heger Boyle. *Female Genital Cutting: Cultural Conflict in the Global Community.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. xiii + 188 pp. $36.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-7063-7.

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National Sovereignty Does Not Disappear

Elizabeth Heger Boyle, associate professor of sociology and law at the University of Minnesota, has provided us with a different analysis on Female Genital Mutilations, usually referred to as FGM, than the ones usually presented. The title of the book already sets the tone in that Boyle refuses to side with those who consider the practice as "mutilation." It is not that she approves such practices by any means, but she prefers to use the word "cutting" in order to set her analysis within a more neutral tone. While I do not adhere myself to such neutrality, I respect Boyle's view and found her approach challenging and insightful. It raises many important questions in the perspectives of the international system, governments, and individuals. It describes how the choices made by governments and individual women are influenced by the conflicting principles of individual human rights and sovereign autonomy. It leads her to conclude that while globalization may exacerbate such conflicts, it can ultimately lead to social change.

Boyle provides us with background information on the practice, tracing the history of the practices within its social context, as well as early efforts for its eradication. The information this first chapter contains is not new and I was surprised that Boyle did not document the efforts of the Tostan association in Senegal which has had such a strong impact on the practice and which, in my opinion, can serve as an example of constructive efforts and vital results for the practice under consideration, but also for many other forms of oppression affecting women in our world today.

In the third chapter, Boyle argues that global institutions such as national sovereignty do not disappear but the relationship between institutions can change over periods of time. She shows how the practice provides an example of how the expansion of rights operates. The establishment of international law to protect women and children from the consequences of unequal power in the family helps us understand the mechanism.

The fourth chapter documents the actions of various associations internationally along with the media and the states to bring about policy reforms. It also illustrates the procedural character of the debate. Chapter five explores policies against the practice more specifically from the 1980s to the 1990s and shows how successful they were in adopting them. She compares various countries. For example, Western countries have tended to pass formal laws while African ones established bureaucratic policies. More examples are developed in chapter six focusing on Egypt, Tanzania, and the United States to illustrate the national policy extension of the international debate over the practice. Her interesting argument is that policies will be more contested when the reform is relevant to local individuals, while countries where the policy has local relevance, nation's standing in the international system is also important.

In chapter seven, she examines the impact of religion on the practice and its continuation. She also looks at the impact of occupation and colonization, as well as the influence of employment and modernization. A very interesting conclusion to this chapter was that regional development influenced attitudes and behavior while national resistance to international norms could outweigh the influence of regional development. Thus, in recent years Egypt had been the country with the most outspoken opponents to the international norm against the practice.

In chapter eight, Boyle discusses demographic and health survey data from the Central African Republic, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, and Sudan. She analyzes how women who oppose the practice tend to explain their position through health and other issues but not through the cultural values that support them.

Boyle ends her book by stating that even though she aimed at critically examining the controversial practice

of FGC, she wanted to show the broader implications of this issue by addressing the complexity between international actors, nation-states, and individuals, showing the involvement of international actors in local practices, while elaborating a theory on the interaction of institutions. She has certainly achieved her aims.

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