



**Undesirable Practices: Women, Children, and the
Politics of the Body in Northern Ghana, 1930-1972
(Expanding Frontiers: Interdisciplinary
Approaches to Studies of Women, Gender, and
Sexuality)**

Jessica Cammaert

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Undesirable Practices examines both the intended and the unintended consequences of “imperial feminism” and British colonial interventions in “undesirable” cultural practices in northern Ghana. Jessica Cammaert addresses the state management of social practices such as female circumcision, nudity, prostitution, and “illicit” adoption as well as the hesitation to impose severe punishments for the slave dealing of females, particularly female children. She examines the gendered power relations and colonial attitudes that targeted women and children spanning pre- and postcolonial periods, the early postindependence years, and post-Nkrumah policies. In particular, Cammaert examines the limits of the male colonial gaze and argues that the power lay not in the gaze itself but in the act of “looking away,” a calculated aversion of attention intended to maintain the tribal community and retain control over the movement, sexuality, and labor of women and children.

With its examination of broader time periods and topics and its complex analytical arguments, *Undesirable Practices* makes a valuable contribution to literature in African studies, contemporary advocacy discourse, women and gender studies, and critical postcolonial studies.

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