

Embodying Honor: Fertility, Foreignness, And Regeneration In Eastern Sudan

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Acacia trees on the cultural landscapes of the Red Sea Hills

Joseph J. Hobbs · Knut Krzywinski · Gidske L. Andersen · Mohamed Talib · Richard H. Pierce · Ahmed E. M. Saadallah

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Abstract This paper examines interactions between five pastoral nomadic culture groups of the Egyptian and Sudanese Red Sea Hills and the acacia trees *Acacia tortilis* (Forssk.) Hayne subsp. *tortilis* and subsp. *raddiana* growing in their arid environments. *A. tortilis* is described as a keystone species both ecologically and culturally: the trees play such critical roles in ecosystems and social groups that their removal would greatly impact both systems. Interviews in the field with the Semitic, Arabic-speaking Ma'aza and Ababda, and the Cushitic, Beja, Bidhaawyeet-speaking Bishaari, Amar Ar and Hadandawa nomads probed the cultural and ecological contexts of acacias in pastoral nomadism, revealing deep insight into traditional ecological knowledge and traditional perceptions and uses of the trees. The paper describes how this knowledge guides pastoral decision-making, with

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J. J. Hobbs
Department of Geography, University of Missouri, 8 Stewart Hall, Columbia, MO 65211, USA
e-mail: hobbsj@missouri.edu

K. Krzywinski (✉)
Department of Biology, University of Bergen, P.O. Box 7800, 5020 Bergen, Norway
e-mail: knut.krzywinski@bio.uib.no

K. Krzywinski · G. L. Andersen
UNI Research Environment, P.O. Box 7810, 5020 Bergen, Norway

G. L. Andersen
e-mail: gidske.andersen@uni.no

M. Talib
Beja Cultural Studies Center, Red Sea University, Main Campus, P.O. Box 23, Port Sudan, Sudan
e-mail: talibm37@yahoo.com

R. H. Pierce
Department of Linguistic, Literary and Aesthetic Studies, University of Bergen, Sydnesplassen 7,
5007 Bergen, Norway
e-mail: richard.pierce@iie.uib.no

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