



Dancing Skeletons: Life and Death in West Africa

Katherine A. Dettwyler

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1995 Margaret Mead Award winner! This personal account by a biocultural anthropologist illuminates important, not-soon-forgotten messages involving the more sobering aspects of conducting fieldwork among malnourished children in West Africa. With nutritional anthropology at its core, *Dancing Skeletons* presents informal, engaging and oftentimes dramatic stories from the field that relate the author's experiences conducting research on infant feeding and health in Mali. Through fascinating vignettes and honest, vivid descriptions, Dettwyler explores such diverse topics as ethnocentrism, culture shock, population control, breastfeeding, child care, the meaning of disability and child death in different cultures, female circumcision, women's roles in patrilineal societies, the dangers of fieldwork, and the realities involved in researching emotionally draining topics. Readers will alternately laugh and cry as they meet the author's friends and informants, follow her through a series of encounters with both peri-urban and rural Bambara culture, and struggle with her as she attempts to reconcile her very different roles as objective ethnographer, subjective friend, and mother in the field. (Not-for-sale instructor resource material available to college and university faculty only; contact the publisher directly.)

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