

# Life in the Sudan

## A Guest is One of Family in Homes of All Muslims

By Bayyinah Sharrieff

After talking for about an hour and a half on our visit (Fatma, her sisters, and I) in El Housh, some of the women went out and brought in the large trays full of dishes of different foods. The whole center of the table was spread with the beautiful appetizing foods. The plates were decorated with lettuce leaves, sliced tomatoes, sliced lemons and limes to add color. They brought out dishes and silverware and set the table, as we were all seated around this large dining table made of mahogany.

**I BELIEVE** that they had slaughtered a lamb in honor of their guests, for we had a well-cooked, tender shoulder of lamb on the table. It is customary in the Sudan to slaughter a lamb on special occasions such as having special guests.

After calling Allah to witness, which is the custom among Muslims everywhere, we began eating. Besides the general conversation about the good food and its preparation all other questions were dropped.

It was such a pleasant atmosphere. We loosened our tobés (the national dress of the women in Sudan) and dropped our headpieces. When only woman are present, it is not necessary for them to keep themselves (adornments) covered. They also brought in helamoor (bitter sweet), a drink made of millet

and other spices, which is poured on hot large grills similar to pancake grills. This is dried into thin sheets when cooled.

Being a very dry climate, dehydrated provisions are easily stored in the Sudan. The helamoor is broken into bits and put into water. Sugar is added with a little lemon juice, and when cooled one has a nice refreshing drink. It reminds one of American Kool-ade. This was one of my favorite drinks while in the Sudan.

**AFTER EATING** all we could hold, the plates were withdrawn and a multicolored jello dessert with custard and sliced bananas was served. Hot spiced tea was

then served after the dessert.

This is a typical meal for those who have guests in the Sudan. It is so complete and so filling one cannot think of wanting for anything after eating such a meal. There is small wonder that the Sudanese hardly eat more than one meal a day when they eat such a meal. However when they have foreign guests who are used to eating three meals a day, they always offer them the three meals. But among themselves, they hardly eat more than one meal a day.

Seeing the tables of the Muslims, followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, has made me reflect many times on the hospitality which I received even in the poorest of homes in the Sudan. I felt very welcomed and very comfortable in this poor house in El Housh. But then, this is Muslim hospitality.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that a guest to our home is a very special honor. Islam teaches love of self and kind. To show this love to our visitors we try to make them as comfortable as they would be in their own homes. We look to their needs and desires, putting ourselves in their places. These are the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad concerning hospitality.

The Holy Qur-an teaches us that Allah will bless us with good for the good that we do (13:29; 53:31).

**ISLAM** places the wayfarer (guest, traveler) on the same level as it does our parents, and near of kin and offspring: "Whatever wealth you spend it is for parents, near of kin and the needy and the wayfarer; and whatever good you do, Allah surely is knower of it. (Holy Qur-an 2:215). It also teaches us that the righteous is one who "gives away wealth out of love for Him (Allah) to the parents, near of kin, and the wayfarer." (Holy Qur-an 2:177).

The way in which you treat your guest reflects on your understanding of Islam and your submission to the one God, Whose proper name is Allah.

to be continued . . .