

Life in the Sudan

The Gezira—continued)
By Bayyiah Sharrifeff

One afternoon during my first week at Abu Gimmery, in the Gezira (Sudan) we were invited to El Housh.

EL HOUSH is a small village on the edge of the Gezira. Bashir drove us through the Gezira to the village. It appeared to be very poor. We had been invited to tea at the home of one of the main men of the village. It was about 5:30 p.m. when we arrived.

There were many small one room houses made of brush, pieces of tin, cardboard and pieces of wood. There were sheep and goats seemingly scattered in the village. There were a few houses surrounded by high walled fences, but things seemed very quiet. There were some young boys playing soccer bare-footed on the light sandy dirt ground.

We drove up to one door of a wall made of dried mud, and straw, and Fatma, her two sisters and I were helped out of the car by her brother. Two young women (in their early twenties) opened the gate and after greeting us we were escorted through small corridors to a living room. They wore colorful tobies (their national dress). They were married women.

ONE CAN always distinguish a married Muslim Sudanese woman, by the amount of gold she wears. They do not care for silver. They wear many thin gold bracelets. Often they wear a necklace with heavy gold charms, or sayings of the prophet Muhammad, of 1400 years ago, or a quotation of the Holy Qur-an. If she wears perfumes, one can also know that she is married: For single women do not wear perfumes. The purpose of perfume is to attract and stimulate an interest. Single women and women who are able to bear children are not to display their adornments or allure men to follow them, for this would be the seductive acts of the devil (Holy Qur-an 7, 18 Sura's). The married woman wears perfumes in the presence of her husband and among the members of her family, Holy Qur-an 24:31.

Whether or not the Sudanese Muslim woman wears the designs of hinna on the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet is another way by which one can tell if a Sudanese woman is married. The women use oils

and hinna to make decorative designs, often in the form of flowers on the palms of their hands. The hinna stains their palms to a deep red-brown color. They also decorate the bottom of their feet with the hinna making the sole solid, and trimming the sides of their feet with decorative designs. One might think that they are wearing stockings if one is not familiar with their customs.

WHEN WE reached the living room the wooden shutters were opened. The sun was in the west, but the heat of the day could still be felt in the ground. There were many bed-like couches along three walls of the room with the . . . boster pillows. The covers of the beds and pillows were of cotton with elaborate embroidery trimming. This, I learned later was all done by hand. The Sudanese Muslim women take much pride in decorating their homes. They make their homes very attractive for it is the teachings of Islam that a woman glorify and beautify her home.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches his female followers to also care for themselves and their homes, for they are the glory of the home. Without the woman, the home is vacant, empty. Allah created all things in pairs (Holy Qur-an). Without woman, man is not whole. And without man, woman is not whole. Together they are able to have off-spring and thus build a nation. This is their fruit. The fruit of their produce depends on the climatic conditions under which it grew (the home atmosphere), and the condition of the soil from which it grew (the health and temperament of the parents). It is the duty therefore of both the father and mother to provide a good home life. And it is the duty of the women to adorn the home for her husband, and provide love, and understanding in a clean home.

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