

What a Family Relationship Means in the Predominantly Muslim Sudan Nation

By Sister Christine

When one refers to one's family in the Sudan — as in most African countries—one does not limit this reference to the mother, father, and their off-spring, but rather includes aunts, uncles, cousins, etc., etc. The family has no real end to its number of members. Europeans have termed this long acknowledgement of blood relations as the "extended family."

A FAMILY member's obligation is not only to his immediate family but to all of the member's of that extended family, with generally the eldest man being the most respected member.

Often one will come across a town or village comprised solely of one family.

The harmony within the extended family is beautiful. When one has a problem, even financial difficulties, one can depend on his family to come to his aid. Furthermore, there seems to be no jealousy within the family unit. If there are any jealousies, they are not evident to onlookers. Resentment also seems to be absent, for if one prospers, the whole family is understood to prosper, and they seemingly are

proud of their prosperous relative.

REFLECTING on this subject recalls a point in the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. The Messenger (Elijah Muhammad) teaches us that when one joins onto his or her own, he is acknowledging and reclaiming his membership in a tremendously large family — that of the Original man.

When a member of the Nation of Islam prospers, each member of the Nation should be proud of his achievements: for with his achievements, goes our name and honor. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us to work in unity for the betterment of self.

He considers every believer a member of his family. And he teaches all of those who accept Islam to treat every brother and sister in the Nation of Islam as a true brother and sister, with much love and respect.

THERE IS another remarkable aspect of this extended family unit in the Sudan, and in Africa in general. That is the respect children show adults. A child in this society must do that which

an adult instructs him. If he is asked to serve the adult, he must do so. If he is told to go to another place, on errand, or given any instructions by an adult, he must do their bidding.

An African child has many mothers. One mother cares for another child as she cares for her own. One will not find orphans (with one exception) in the Sudan and I believe in all of black Africa. If for some reason a child loses his immediate parents, he is taken in by another relative.

Often a child does not stay with his parents for months and even years. For example, if one family unit (mother, father and their offspring) has a large number of children, two or three of their children will go and live with grandparents, an aunt or another relative. The parents of the child do not give money to those taking care of the child, for it is not considered a burden to care for children.

THE CHILDREN are loved very much in the Sudan — and with all of the love they receive, one might think them to be very spoiled, but the contrary is true. The children in the Su-

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dan are among the best-mannered children with whom I have become acquainted.

One seldom hears of a child being struck in the Sudan. If and when this happens, other adults will come to the aid of the child, and discuss the offense of the child with the angered adult. Then if it is decided the child deserves punishment, the punishment is carried out.

I mentioned earlier that there is one exception to the non-existence of orphans in the Sudan. The Christian

missionaries have taken into their schools children they claim are orphans who have been converted to Christianity. Therefore, these children must be adopted by Christians (there are few Christians in the Sudan).

SELDOM will one find a child of the Northern and Central Sudan in an orphanage. The children in these orphanages are from the Southern Sudan. I will not discuss this further, at the present time, because discussion of this subject will bring us into major political problems of the Sudan.