

Life in the Sudan

By Bayyinah Sharrieff

I was very excited about my trip south to Wad Medani, and the very next day after my return to Khartoum, I met with some of my colleagues at the medical faculty gahawa (coffee shop) to tell them about my stay in the Gezira.

The University was still on summer vacation which was from March to the end of July, but the medical faculty's library, study rooms and gahawa were open the year around.

The fifth and sixth year medical students (The medical faculty curriculum lasted six years. The last three years included studying patients and a year of internship). Some parts of the science and engineering faculties were also opened.

In universities set up on the English standard, a college is termed "faculty." Such universities are composed of various faculties.

THE MEDICAL, economic and art students (past their second year) I found the most easy to converse with. They had been exposed to some Christian western culture through their European and American instructors and professors. Some of them had traveled to England and Europe with the World University Student Association, and others with their instructors. A large percentage of them had been to Cairo, Egypt which is considered modern compared to the Sudan. I believe now the reason that I found conversing with them easier was because they excused much of my Christian upbringing which made me awkward in their Muslim society. They took patience with me and helped me to adjust to the Muslim society.

As we sat in the medical students gahawa, we had a soft cold drink called kirk-ka-day. Kirk-ka-day is very high in Vitamin C. It reminds one of small dried flower petals. It, like many of the food stuffs and drinks are stored dried in the Sudan.

One adds cold water and sugar to the dried leaves and lets it stand a short time. The leaves are then drained off and one has

a cold red, slightly bitter, refreshing soft drink.

THE MAN who was in charge of the gahawa and sold the hot teas, coffee, and cold drinks grew so accustomed to seeing me come there that he knew the type of drink that I would ask for, and many times he refused to take the cost of the drink from me. We all called him uncle. This is a familiar practice among the Sudanese. Being Muslims they consider one another relatives. And, the older members of their society they equate with the older members of their family, for example: The young people call those who are of the age of their grandmothers, grandmother. The men and women of the age of their parents, brothers and sisters they call uncle and aunt. One can see in reality the beauty of oneness, of the closely united family just by the observation of the way in which the elders are addressed in this Sudanese society.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches his followers that we are one family, the Believers. All Muslims (Believers in the one God Allah, who submit to His Will; are "brethren" (Holy Quran 49:10).

The Sudanese students were a very intelligent group of students. I have not found the measure to them among any group of students in America with the exception of the Muslims who study the teachings of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, who are all eager to learn more of the superior knowledge which the Honorable Elijah Muhammad gives out so freely and abundantly to all of us who wish to learn.

TO BE A student at the University of Khartoum was an honor to the Sudanese. And, they respected that honor. Only the top of their secondary school graduates were selected to study at the university. The system of study is very strict there. If a student fails one course, that student will have to repeat all of his courses for that year, not just the one he failed. There is no summer session to make up for a failed course. Nor can one mix up first and second year

courses at one time. The stress, strain, and tension is extremely great there among the students. For one exam is given during the whole year, and if one fails that exam, he fails the course. Much of the honor of the family rests in the achievements of their children and the students know this. Much attention, care, and respect is given to the student in the Sudan. The Sudanese students do know that the future of their country is with them. This makes them very serious students, and a like seriousness cannot be found among the American university students of the undergraduate level. American students are more interested in Campus life, or extracurricular activities. They, on a whole think more of amusement than studying, and now they are displeased with the norm of their society.

THE HONORABLE Elijah Muhammad puts much stress on obtaining knowledge so that one may develop wisdom, and have understanding. He follows the teachings of the Holy Qur-an which encourage the Believer to study and gain knowledge and shun sport and play (games) which take up valuable time (Holy Qur-an 5:90.91; 2:219).

The European students like the American students consider sport and play a very necessary part of college life.

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