

Relates Sudan Customs for Wedding Celebrations

By Sister Christine

A large celebration announces the engagement of the couple. It is here that the bridegroom-to-be brings gifts to his fiancée. These gifts include jewelry, perfume, material, clothes, shoes, etc. All the people in the village attend the celebrations without a formal invitation — unlike the practice here in America.

DURING this engagement period, the girl is prepared for marriage. Dresses are made of the material presented to her by her fiancé. She takes many treatments for her skin, making it soft and clear. Special care is taken for her hair and figure. In short, she undergoes a beautifying treatment.

While the female is preparing herself physically, the man is more preoccupied with financial matters. He must secure a home and furnish it. Generally, both of their families will help him in doing so. In general, the Sudanese man is from 10-to-20 years older than the girl he takes for his wife.

The wedding celebration lasts two to five days. Again anyone and everyone in the town attend. Musicians are brought in to provide entertainment. Clowns and jokers also are brought in to entertain. Food and soft drinks are plentiful for all.

THE celebration is very gay. There is dancing—but not like the dancing here in America. The female dances separately from the male. They never touch even hands when dancing. The bride and groom also dance. Her dance is very charming, but done with her eyes closed. When they dance no one else dances at that time.

Everyone has his eyes on the couple. Comments of agreement and wishes of

success are extended to the newlyweds. Large gifts of money from the guests are presented to the couple. Carrying through the tradition, the single men are seated separately from the women.

Everyone is dressed attractively. The tobies (national dress) of the women are in very soft-flowing cottons, organzas, and silks. The golden adornment of the bride is indeed from head to foot. She wears a cap made of gold to cover her head. Streamers from it extend down her back, and a collar necklace of gold, with long chains, often extend past the waistline in the front.

WHEN THE girl is married, she does not take the name of her husband. She keeps her father's name, for she is a product of her father and his family. All of her actions are the results of his training. His family's reputation is carried in his name.

The wedding party spends the first days of the celebration generally at the groom's home. Then the wedding party moves to the home of the bride's family. The families make the necessary arrangements on the location of the celebration.

During the first nights of the marriage, the couple does not sleep together. It is only after the celebration that she goes to live in the home provided for her by her husband. Generally she takes a sister of a female relative with her. Often the newlyweds stay in the home of the bride's family to see that they adjust to one another.

THE FAMILIES play an important role in the life of an individual in the Sudan.

To be continued