



**MODERNIZATION AND SOCIALIZATION:  
MUSLIM FAMILY INSTITUTION IN KHARTOUM,  
SUDAN**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the changes that are taking place in the Muslim family institution in Sudan as a result of modernisation. The study determines the relationship between modernisation and socialisation within Muslim families in Khartoum as a case study. It looks at modernisation from the perspective of education and the involvement of women in the workforce, their sexual liberalization and religiosity. The study is primarily descriptive in nature making use of the survey method. For the purpose of this study, the survey instrument is a self-administered questionnaire that is developed to collect data. A total of 300 respondents from 100 families is chosen. The results suggest that most of the respondents carry out their role of nurturing children and inculcating Islamic values in them with emphasis on respecting elders and promoting modesty. The results also reveal an inverse relationship between sexual liberalization and socialisation with the Pearson Correlation of  $-.308$ , indicating that sexual liberalization has a negative impact on the way Muslims perform their family functions, maintain their familial relations and promote the Islamic pattern of behaviour. In terms of education, the study reveals a negative correlation, suggesting that the role of women in preserving the nature and structure of a Muslim family could be adversely affected. The study sheds some light on how some indicators of modernisation influence the socialisation process of the Sudanese Muslims in Khartoum.

## ملخص البحث

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الوقوف على التغيرات التي حدثت في مؤسسة الأسرة المسلمة بالسودان من جراء التأثير بظاهرة التحضر. وإزاء ذلك تنشُد الدراسة استكشاف العلاقة بين كل من عملية التحضر وعملية التربية في الأسرة السودانية من واقع دراسة حالة في ولاية الخرطوم. حيث تتناول الدراسة عملية التحضر من الزوايا التالية: التعليم وخروج المرأة إلى العمل والتحرر النوعي ومستوى التدين وعلى الرغم من أن هذه الدراسة اعتمدت وبصورة أساسية على الأسلوب الوصفي الذي يستند إلى نتائج المسح الخاص بجمع البيانات، إلا أن هذا الأسلوب قد استُخدم أيضاً لتفسير مدلولات نتائج التحليل الكمي لتلك البيانات، لذا يُمثل الاستبيان الأداة الرئيسة لجمع البيانات الأولية من مجتمع البحث. فلقد تم توزيع 300 استبيان وجمعها من عينة البحث البالغة عددها 100 أسرة مقيمة بولاية الخرطوم. وبناء على ذلك خلُصت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن معظم المبحوثين يقومون بأدوارهم تجاه تنشئة أبنائهم وغرس القيم الإسلامية فيهم، خاصة في إرشاد أبنائهم وتوجيههم بشأن احترام الصغير للكبير والتأكيد على قيم التواضع والاحتشام. وقد كشفت الدراسة وجود علاقة عكسية بين التحرر النوعي والتربية في حياة الأسرة السودانية، حيث بلغت قيمة معامل ارتباط بيرسون إلى 3.8، وهو أعلى معدّل مما يعنى أن التحرر النوعي قد ترك أثراً سلبياً على عملية التربية في نطاق الأسرة السودانية المسلمة، فكان التأثير السلبي على ممارسة الأسرة لوظائفها الحياتية وعلى المحافظة على العلاقات والروابط الأسرية وعلى تقديم النموذج السلوكي الإسلامي وترويجها. وبالنسبة لأثر مؤشر التعليم على عملية التربية فإن الدراسة قد كشفت أيضاً وجود علاقة ارتباط سلبية حيث أن دور المرأة في المحافظة على طبيعة وهيكّل الأسرة المسلمة قد اعتراه الكثير من أوجه القصور. وعليه فإن الدراسة قد ألقى الضوء على حقيقة مؤداها أن بعض مؤشرات التحضر قد أثرت سلباً على العملية التربوية في الأسرة السودانية المسلمة بولاية الخرطوم.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or any other institutions.

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**MODERNIZATION AND SOCIALIZATION: MUSLIM FAMILY  
INSTITUTION IN KHARTOUM, SUDAN**

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*This work is dedicated to my parents and my beloved husband. Without their patience, understanding, support, and most of all love, the completion of this work would not have been possible.*

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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

The present study seeks to investigate the changes that are taking place in the Muslim family institution of Sudan under the influence of factors and processes of modernisation, with particular reference to Khartoum City. The Muslim family is a divinely inspired institution, with marriage at its core (Dhami & Sheikh, 2000). In Sudan, the family is an extended family, as opposed to the nuclear family prevalent in many Western countries. The family includes grandparents, mother, father, children, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces. Children from the same father and different mothers consider themselves as brothers and sisters (Dei Wal, 2004; Sudanese Community Profile, 2007).

According to Dhami and Sheikh (2000), the importance attached to family as a cornerstone of a healthy and balanced society, is one of the most striking features of the Muslim society. Like traditional Sudanese families, the Muslim family is extended, often spanning three or more generations. The advantage of extended family is that it offers stability, coherence, physical and psychological support [to its members], particularly in times of need (Dhami & Sheikh, 2000). As Fluehr-Lobban (1994: 61) pointed out, “the social condition of the extended family provides not only shelter, food, physical space for its individual members, but it contains within it a much broader ideology of mutual support and solidarity for the group family.” However, as a result of social, economic and political transformation influenced by the West, there are bound to be changes in the traditional features of Muslim families.

The locale of this study is *Alemtidad*, a town within the capital city of Sudan, Khartoum, with its population coming from Northern Sudan, Southern Sudan, Eastern Sudan, Western Sudan, and Central Sudan among other areas. The Republic of the Sudan (hereafter Sudan) is situated in the north-eastern part of Africa. The world's longest river, the Nile, cuts across the country from south to north (Collins, 2008). Sudan is a landlocked country sharing a border with eight nations, the largest being with Ethiopia on the east. It is bordering Egypt in the north, the Red Sea in the northeast, Eritrea and Ethiopia in the east, Kenya and Uganda in the southeast, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic in the southwest, Chad in the west and Libya in the northwest. Sudan contains a semi-dry area between the Sahara to the north and the tropical regions to the south. The northern part of Sudan is mainly made-up of scrublands and desert that transform into grasslands and savannah in the south. Sudan encompasses a tropical, equatorial climate with a population density of approximately thirty people per square mile. The majority of the citizens are Muslims that accounts about 70% of the Sudanese people. Around 17% of the people practice traditional religions, and the remainder are mostly Christian. Arabic is the official language of Sudan, though English is widely spoken. Sudan is the largest country in Africa (see Figure 1.1 below).



**Figure 1.1: Map of the Republic of the Sudan**

Sudanese families are based on a patriarchal system and extended organisation (Chuo1, 2005). Marriage is a very important affair, celebrated by the whole community and the couples remain strongly committed to it with the support of their

families and the greater community. As such, men as well as women work together in order to build a strong family. The male is the head of the family who enforces rules as guidelines to avoid household misunderstandings. The head fends for the family and the role of the female is that of a housewife.

Elders play an important role in Sudanese culture. They are respected by all members of their community and their role is reflective of the judicial, political, and mediation system (Chuol, 2005). Elders strive for peace in the community and act as peacemakers among individuals, families, and groups in the community. In Sudan, the elders in the community usually handle any issues regarding children or families in the community, and school authorities take disciplinary action on all matters regarding a child in the school system.

The Sudanese are divided into distinct people groups or tribes with a unique identity and a unique set of needs. Sudanese are composed of Nubians in the North, the Beja in the East, the black Africans in the South, Fur (Darfur) from the West, Nuba from the Southwest, and Funj (Blue Nile) from the East (Chuol, 2005). The Sudanese people are accustomed to a traditional value system where everyone has a place and position in society, and does not feel like a stranger. The Sudanese in the north are predominantly Arab Muslims and their daily life and beliefs are based on the Islamic laws and traditions. Most of the Sudanese in the south are Christians and pagans (Chuol, 2005). As such, these people in the Southern Sudan have a wide range of traditional customs and beliefs.

After independence in 1956, Sudan set about the task of nation building and achieving economic independence, by continuing with the British and Western ideals of modernisation process and development, especially in agriculture, through mechanization (Eltayeb, 2005). According to Jha (1985), the process of modernisation

essentially involved a rational structural transformation of not only the social, economic and political order of a society, but also simultaneous changes in its belief system, values and way of life as a whole. The new economic and political aspects of the Sudanese society had in many ways affected traditional patterns of a Muslim family. As Dhami and Sheikh (2000) pointed out, many would now consider an unmarried couple, a single mother and a homosexual couples as equally legitimate expressions of the family unit.

Talking about the modernisation of Islamic law in “Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives”, Donohue and Esposito (1982: 179) indicated that as a result of the impact of the West, modern changes in Islamic law occurred “through the enactment of commercial and penal codes, which, both in form and substance, were derived from European models.” Muslims are supposed to adhere to the true principles of Islam – the provisions of the faith, the oneness of Allah, acts of worship, the principles of ethics and the fundamental rules of legal transactions, failure of which could lead to destruction. As Subhī Mahmasānī in Donohue and Esposito (1982: 186) warns, “To sum up, the most important factor in the decline of Muslims is their neglect of the duties of Islam.” In this light, this study is an attempt to examine the challenges that the Muslim family institution in Sudan is facing as a result of the process of modernisation.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Modernisation process has a long history in Sudan, with the Turkish ruler, Mohamed Ali Pasha, introducing the Modern Elementary Education in 1824 and, in economic terms, the British colonialists, who established a large-scale agricultural irrigated

project to produce cotton at the beginning of 1900, are credited to have initiated the modernisation process in this area (Mohammed, 2007; Eltayeb, 2005).

However, most of the transformations in many countries are concentrated on social change and family attitude, especially with regard to the status of women and the role of a family in the society (Polat, Yuksel, Discigil & Meteris, 2005). In Sudan, one of the striking features of social change is that women have more physical presence in public life, outdoor activities, festivity and heading households (Ahmed, 2005).

The presence of women in public is attributed mostly to the constitutional provisions. In the constitution, Sudanese women are granted equal rights as citizens such as equality before the law, the right to pass citizenship to their children, equality in political rights like voting, passive suffrage, and holding any civil post including judiciary. Women are entitled to equal rights compared to men in education, health, and work (Badri, 2006).

According to statistics, the number of girls who were nominated to enrol in institutes of higher education has been increasing over the years, from 23,209 in 2001/2002 to 26,711 during the 2002/2003 academic year, though there is a slight amount of gender discrepancy in some specializations, such as Islamic studies (Ahmed, 2005). As a result of this trend, there are a few women who received higher education and have reached top executive positions. As pointed out by Ahmed (2005), female literacy varies from 24% in Western Darfur to 68% in Khartoum whereas in rural areas, illiteracy rates were 62% females and 44% males, those in urban areas literary rates were 34% females and 21% males.

Once enrolled, dropout rates seem relatively low and similar for both genders, except in 14-16 years in rural areas. Nevertheless a substantial number of women are

employed in the public sector in lower positions. According to Badri (2006), in some urban centres like the capital city, employed women represent 77% of the employees in the public and private sectors but the overall participation of women in economic activities has increased from 18% to 30% since the beginning of the 1990s. As Fluehr-Lobban (1994: 137) pointed out, “Even in a country as traditionally conservative as the Sudan, the participation of women in the work force has doubled in the past decade, from 7 percent to 15 percent of all women.” In 1996, women comprised of 37.9% of the work force (Badri, 2006).

Education also has been found to be one of the factors that postpone marriage timing in Khartoum. According to Morgan (1986), the age at marriage in Sudan rose sharply across the 1965-1975 marriage cohorts. The more educated and urban born marry later. In other words, education influences the timing of marriage among educated women in Sudan. Other factors include structural changes such as occupational differentiation, urbanization, imported movies and the Sudanese Women Union, which introduced new ideas.

Sudan has been involved in internal conflicts since independence in 1956. The conflicts hampered the process of reintegration and gave space for women’s rights. The heads of households left their families in the urban centres and cities to find places to settle in rural areas. The trend created households headed by women, who were forced to work in informal sector (Ahmed, 2005).

The women’s world in both urban and rural communities has been considered domestic and men’s world as public ([www.settlement.org/cp/english/sudan/](http://www.settlement.org/cp/english/sudan/)). According to El-Tigani (1997), despite the strength of extended family relations in Sudan, a state of ‘partial modernisation’ has consistently transformed family relations, to some extent: disparate patterns of family relations developed in the country and the

stability of the institution of family and family interrelationships have been gradually, but consistently in a process of abrupt transformation both in the urban and the rural sides of the country. As a result, a family's roles of bringing about care, love, affection, loyalty, support and a sense of commitment and obligation are affected (Keating & Marsh, 2006).

The concepts of modernisation and family have also been investigated and discussed by number of scholars including Kashyap (2004), Bayyumi (1976), and Warburg (2006), among others. For instance, Bayyumi (1976) discussed the interest of the Brethren of Egypt in family reform, with a view of preparing women to play a positive role in society. According to Bayyumi, the Brethren realized that women were an integral part of the society and therefore, were sympathetic with women problems. The same applies to Sudan where women's rights under Islam are one of the central issues in the ideology of the Sudanese Muslim Brothers.

According to Warburg (2006), the contribution of al-Turabi (1993) to family change is unique. In his publication of *al-mar'a fi ta'alim al-Islam*, al-Turabi states that in Islam there is complete equality between male and female. Thus women are free to choose their partners in life, have the right to own property and to hold almost any public position. He admits that these principles were not implemented in Islam since early times due to pre-Islamic (*Jahili*) habits that prevailed in society. The early Shari'ah judges were the ones who misinterpreted these rules and as a result, women in Islam had been discriminated against. Thus, according to al-Turabi women should be allowed to participate in a mixed (*mukhalatah*) society because the Shari'ah does not forbid their socializing with men. Consequently, women are allowed by Islamic rules to move freely out of their homes. He also challenges the wearing of *hijab* as obligatory and states that in the Holy Qur'an only the wives of the Prophet

Muhammad were obliged to wear it. In the public offices of the government (including as judges), municipalities, or the army, al-Turabi proposed sweeping reforms to enable women to play central role in all these positions. However, it is interesting to note that he has not challenged the Shari'ah but interpreted it in different ways.

In this regard, the findings of Inglehart and Norris (2003) could be taken into consideration. According to these scholars, both Islamic and Western societies are similar in their positive orientation toward democratic ideals [that include secularization]. However, Western societies are different from Islamic societies, concerning the transformation of attitudes and behaviour associated with the 'sexual revolution' that has occurred since the 1960s, have brought about fundamental changes in the nature of modern families, particularly in lifestyles and sex roles. This gap has steadily widened as the younger generation in the West has gradually become more liberal in their sexual mores while the younger generation in Islamic societies remains deeply traditional. But the reality on the ground is that modernisation, especially the Western model, is at work in Muslim countries including Sudan. Hence, this study is conducted to assess how Muslim families in Sudan performed and maintained their basic functions and examine the extent to which modernisation influenced their basic function of nurturing children, maintaining Islamic values as well as promoting modesty and familial relations.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study is conducted to investigate the changes in the institution of Muslim families in Khartoum as a result of modernisation and contribute to the body of knowledge as well as literature on family change.

Modernisation has resulted into a number of changes in the nature and structure of family institutions. The number of marriages is decreasing while the number of divorces is increasing (Keating & Marsh, 2006). With divorce, children go through a difficult period of adjusting to new arrangements. There is the trend of cohabitation where living together is becoming more popular than ever (Tepperman & Wilson, 1993). With cohabitation, more children are brought up in single-parent families. Then, there is an increase in the number of single parents with teenage pregnancy as an important factor. With single parents, children are deprived of a parent. Another aspect of modern society that changed the family is sexual liberalisation.

The family situation is becoming more complex when children are involved. El-Naggar (2005), in her presentation at a symposium on a social science approach to modernisation in contemporary Muslim societies, said that there is no hope of modernisation of Muslim societies unless the principle of separation between “mosque” and state is accepted and applied. However, this was in contrast to what Bayyumi (1976) asserted. According to him, the Brethren believed that Western values corrupted the relationship between the sexes and so led to the corruption of the family. For instance, Bayyumi reported that when the Westerners came to Egypt, they brought with them their “wine, women and sin,” and introduced the dirty films”, suggestive popular music, naked women in the streets and beaches and the uncontrollable press with its lewd pictures. Mixing of the sexes became common practice at all official and unofficial functions. Women participated in partying and dancing because “European women do it and we want to be like Europe in all respects.” As a result, Egyptian family life was torn between Islamic and Western

values. Some families remained committed Muslim, while others “out-westernized the Westerners” (p.251).

India was another country, which embraced the Western type of Modernisation. However, after a decade and a half of using Western models of modernisation, the hard reality is that Western model of modernisation could not change social constitution in India and economic development had remained unfulfilled dreams (Kashyap, 2004). The promised pay off of development and modernisation had not been realized. On the other hand, its performance and non-performance had generated intractable problems (Dube, 1988). Sudan is not an exception in what has been experienced in Egypt, India and other countries, as it is also facing pressure to modernize in the name of development. Despite the strength of traditional family, modernisation process has consistently transformed family relations in Sudan (El-Tigani, 1997). In other words, structures that have held for generations are being pulled down (Ahmed, 1992).

Therefore, the study tries to investigate the transformation that has taken place in the structure and function of a basic institution of Muslim family in Khartoum, Sudan under the influence of modernisation with particular reference to the care of children, respect for elders, modesty and protection of its members, gender roles. The research also assesses the relationship between indicators of modernisation (sexual liberalization and women education) and their effects on family relations.