

ISLAM AND THE EXTENDED FAMILY

Prepared for the Annual Meeting
Society for the Scientific Study of Religion
October 24-26, 1975
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Lois Ibsen al Faruqi
323 Bent Road
Wyncote, Pa. 19095

ISLAM AND THE EXTENDED FAMILY

X

Several works already available in print or forthcoming have given detailed descriptions of the Islamic family (Abdal-Ati 1974; 1976; Esposito 1974; Ahmad 1974; Lutfiyya 1966; Fuller 1961). It is not my intention to attempt a repetition of those works. Instead, this paper will present in Part I a summary description of the Islamic family, which will facilitate our focusing attention on some characteristics of that structure which might be therapeutic for the social problems we face today in North American society. Whether we be followers of Islam, of Christianity, of Judaism or "Fitzliputzli-ism," life in America in the 1970's presents inordinate strains on the family system as we know it and, as a result of this social disorganization **or reorganization, often** /causes serious damage to individuals as well. These problems and their possible solutions through some form of extended¹ family organization shall be discussed in Part II of this paper. Part III presents some prerequisites for the success of such a social plan. Return-
ing to the Islamic extended family itself, Part IV discusses the future of that institution of Islamic society in reference to contemporary innovation and possible change. ✓

I. The ʿĀ'ilah of Islamic Culture

There are extended family systems operative in various cultures and regions of the world, but the one chosen as a model for comparative study in this presentation is that of the Islamic ʿĀ'ilah. My information regarding the extended family as it is operative in Islamic culture was derived, first of all, from Qur'ānic injunctions and from the sunnah or

example of the Prophet Muḥammad; second, from works by contemporary Muslims on the family; third, from the published results of sociological and anthropological field research; fourth, from informants and observation while I lived or visited in various Muslim countries of the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and southeast Asia; and fifth, from my personal experience as wife, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, and mother within a closely knit Muslim kinship organization.

To describe the Islamic family means to describe a social organ which is recognizable over a wide geographic area. Despite some regional variations due to local customs which have been carried over from pre-Islamic social structures and institutions of the various regions, the family is known in Arabic-speaking regions, important features of the ḥā'ilah, as the extended/ have relevance among Muslims living in north and central Africa, in the Middle East, in a large portion of the Indian subcontinent, in Malaysia, Indonesia and the southern Philippine Islands.²

A. Composition

The Islamic family has been defined by a contemporary Muslim sociologist as an organization of individuals who are "related to one another through blood ties and/or marital bonds and whose relatedness is such that it entails mutual role expectations. . ." (Abdal-Ati 1974:38). Beyond these basic criteria, we would add that the Islamic family is a patrilineal,³ patrilocal network which accords little significance to the nuclear family unit except among highly Westernized Muslims. In fact, there seems to be no precise term to designate this type of family unit in Arabic.⁴ On the contrary, the Muslim ḥā'ilah includes three or four generations of mutually dependent individuals who are commonly nucleated

in a single residence or in separate but proximate accommodations. The family which shares a common residence has been designated as "residentially extended" while that whose members share the same roles and dependencies but are residentially dispersed to a greater or lesser degree is described as "functionally extended" (Farsoun 1970:II, 257). The ʿā'ilah includes not only mother and father and their unwed children, but also married sons and their wives and children, in addition to unwed paternal aunts and uncles (Lutfiyya 1966:142). It may include the various cells of polygynous marriages, which are legally and socially acceptable but statistically rare in Islamic society. When the grandfather or eldest member of the family dies, the eldest married uncle usually takes over, or another of the married males becomes a new nucleus for an ʿā'ilah.

The individual members descendent from a common paternal ancestor also claim membership in a larger organization. This ḥamūlah or clan has its own weaker ties of dependency and responsibility which accord with the less direct blood relationship. They are evidenced in the terms ibn ʿamm (son of paternal uncle) and bint ʿamm (daughter of paternal uncle) by which the members address their peers, and ʿamm (paternal uncle) or ʿammah (paternal aunt) used for all elders of the ḥamūlah. Beyond this the individual Muslim also feels a "kinship" with all other members of the ummah, or the world community of Muslims. He refers to its members as ikhwān or "brothers" and akhawāt or "sisters."

B. Roles

It has been clearly stated and observed that in the Islamic family the roles of men and women are complementary rather than competitive (Nelson 1968:60; Saleh 1972:196), different rather than discriminatory of

either sex (Ahmad 1974:15-16; Abdal-Ati 1975:2-3; el Hamamsy 1970:574). In other words, the male and female roles are equal in importance but not equal in substance. For the female, her role as wife and mother is considered "the most sacred and essential one" (Badawi 1975:141). There is nothing in Islam however to prevent her from fulfilling other roles in society if they are not undertaken at the expense of her success in her domestic obligations. As compensation for her fulfilling these female roles, the Islamic family imposes on its male members the obligation to provide for, support and protect all female members of the 'ā'ilah--wives, sisters, aunts, mothers, widows, daughters--as well as all other needy kin. The wife is to receive a marriage gift (mahr) which belongs to her exclusively, even should she be divorced by her husband (Anderson 1970:494). It is to be divided in immediate and deferred portions, the former to be relinquished at the time of marriage, the latter as a kind of "severance settlement" in case of divorce. The woman usually returns to her family in case of divorce, and her male relatives provide support, though the former husband is responsible for her maintenance during a three-month period ('iddah) following the divorce (Qur'ān 2:241), and for longer periods if there are children for whom she is caring (Qur'ān 2:233).

The 'ā'ilah is thus not only a social entity but also an economic unit for mutual aid and assistance to its members. Social and economic activities are undertaken jointly, and their benefits shared by the family jointly. The only exception to this is what women who join the family through marriage retain their legal personalities, their maiden names and their right to full possession and control over their possessions, their property and its earnings (Qur'ān 4:23).

The Islamic family system is fortunate in not only being upheld by society, but in having a basis in religion. The importance of marriage (Qur'ān 4:1), of having and raising children (Qur'ān 7:189-190), of close attachment to kin (Qur'ān 4:8; 4:36; 17:26)--all these features/basis ^{have religious} in the Qur'ān itself as well as in the sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad. In addition, the religious laws which have evolved from these two basic sources have given further reinforcement to the extended family system ^{and support} through specific provisions for inheritance/ based on nearness of relationship and sex. Different law schools (madhāhib) / ^{may} differ on many small points, but the major directives evidence an overwhelming conformity. This is an important influence for the unity of the Islamic family over such a wide geographic area (Jeffery 1959:204).

II. The Extended Family and Contemporary American Society

The nuclear or conjugal family of Western society has been the object of much concern and speculation in recent times. For decades thinkers have viewed the changes in its structure and function with no little concern. The contemporary situation of the family has been designated as a "predicament," a "dilemma," a "tragedy"; and some define the disturbance as a "violent breaking up of a system" (Carle C. Zimmerman, quoted in Adams 1971:353). Others have been more optimistic, feeling that the changes are more signs of reorganization than of complete disintegration. They express the belief that the important functions the family fulfills cannot be covered by any other known social institution (Nimkoff 1965:357-62; Schelsky 1954:331-35) and therefore that the present upheaval is more a period of restructuring than collapse. It is argued that even in those societies where one or more of the functions usually ascribed to the family can be or have been taken over by other

societal institutions, the residual functions cannot be satisfied by that substitute institution or institutions. For example, after the early attempts by Communist Russia and the Israeli kibbutzim to completely supplant the family in their societies, it became apparent that the family was a necessity which could not be eradicated without serious detriment to its members, and subsequently to society. It would seem therefore that our only course is to revise our family system before it is too late to save what little remains of its validity.

Some of the recent changes in the family represent reactions to such discoveries of science as artificial insemination, improvements in contraception, incubator birth, etc. Others are due to the myriad changes in social, economic and political factors in contemporary society (e.g., urbanization, widening role of governmental agencies, increase in size and impersonal nature of productive organizations, mobility, increased employment of women, declining birth rate, increased leisure). The family has also been compelled to face drastic changes in ideas concerning the Absolute and the relation of man to religious ideas and religious institutions. Organized religion no longer exerts the stabilizing influence it formerly had on the family, and there is a profound lack of consensus on what is right and what is wrong, what is desirable and what is undesirable.

Whether these changes are seen as "dissolution" or "progress," no one can fail to realize that there are drastic "inconsistencies" (Adams 1971:350) between the functions demanded of the contemporary//family and the adaptation of the prevalent institution to fulfill those needs. As a result of this imbalance, adults and children in our society--as well as society itself--are suffering immeasurable damage. As participants

in that society, we cannot be oblivious to these problems. We have an obligation at least to try to stem the tide of "disintegration," or--if you will--to direct the course of "progress." The benefits which can be expected from the family in its role as buffer and liason organization between the individual and the larger segments of society are not being attained under the present nuclear family system prevalent in Western society. In fact, the social disorganization experienced by the middle class in the mid-1970's is nearly as great as that which characterized the low income family of the early 1960's (Woodward and Malamud 1975:48). Not only is the nuclear family in its new circumstances failing to do its job; the high divorce rate⁵ is truncating that family cell still further. One American child in six is now raised in a single-parent family, often a parent who, because of financial necessity, is also a working parent.

We need to combat the contemporary reluctance to consider the extended family as a viable solution to our societal problems or as a directive towards that goal. The extended family includes a wide set of mutual responsibilities, but it also includes a wide set of advantages and benefits. Before we reject the increased obligations as unacceptable, before we throw out any infringement on our individual freedom as intolerable, let us realize that we are today paying a tremendous price for this freedom, a societally devastating burden for our escape from responsibility. No doubt it is time for us all to look hard and long at alternatives for the future. This is true for those societies which are already deeply involved in the problems resulting from family "disintegration" or "progress," as well as for those developing societies which

stand at the crossroads and are still deciding on their future direction.

The advantages that could be derived from some form of extended family system seem manifold. We shall deal here with its possible contribution to only some of our contemporary problems.

A. Women's Role

One of the problems facing Western society today is the indecision about women's role in the family and society. Recognizing the injustices which have been suffered by the female members of society in many places and periods, we would suggest that the proper remedy lies not in a rampant individualism which causes woman to forsake her responsibilities to husband, parents and even to children in her endeavor to be "liberated." This so-called freedom is creating instead a new kind of bondage for many women. They are being called upon to fill more than their share of the societal burden. They are being pressured to combine the role of homemaker and mother with that of a job or a career or risk the condemnation of their society. Society has demanded that a large proportion of the female population fulfill a male role and a female role at the same time. In most cases, these women have failed to succeed at both. As a result of their struggle, the male members of society are also being pushed into a correlative double role--to be maintainers and wage earners at the same time as they tend the kids and cook the meals and launder the clothes. Such mixing of responsibilities, whether for the female or male, is bound to result in frustration and tragedy.

The male suffers not only physical difficulty as he attempts to take over some of the wife's obligations which she is unable to fulfill in her new multiple role as career woman-wife-mother; in such situations his intellectual and emotional satisfaction are also curtailed. His

wife does not have the mental or emotional reserve energy to listen to his problems and successes. She has no time to share in his plans when she has to cope with her double set of problems, originating outside as well as inside the home.

A childless couple has less difficulty in managing such a situation, but the majority of American families have one or more children. The mad dash for jobs outside the home has seriously increased the number and severity of physical, mental and emotional problems among young children. Children are often inadequately cared for by babysitters or day care centers; others are left to fend for themselves as "latchkey" children until the parents return from their separate jobs. Statistics leave little doubt that these children, their parents and society are in need of drastic changes. Every year at least one million children run away from home in the United States. Juvenile delinquency is increasing so rapidly that today one child in every nine can be expected to appear in juvenile court before the age of eighteen, and suicide has become the second most important cause of death among young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four in this country (Woodward and Malamud 1975:48). Often the strains on mother and father and children become ^{so} unbearable ^{that} the family is broken by divorce, and the problems multiply with the increased polarization between individuals. Single parents, whether male or female, experience even greater problems in coping with the multi-role life.

Such difficulties could be alleviated by an extended family system in which elder or unmarried members of the family cover some of the child-rearing burdens of the working or even the non-working mother and enable her to provide the back-up physical, intellectual and emotional support needed by the working males. The wife would then enjoy a real

"liberation" to devote her major efforts to overseeing her family responsibilities; or, if other women in the family are free and wish to fulfill that role, to pursue a career of her choice with free conscience. The extended family organization as exemplified in the 'a'ilah makes it possible for women to choose to have a career without detriment to any individual member of the family or any sector of society.

B. Loneliness

A second problem in modern society is the personal loneliness experienced by many of its members. In this regard, we mention especially the older men and women who do not fit into the nuclear kinship unit. The fate of the aged is to live in isolation from intergenerational contact once their children have grown, their loneliness and isolation broken only by occasional dutiful visits from children or grandchildren. When they become unable to manage their physical affairs, they are sent to old folks' or nursing homes where they await death. Their family lives seem to end with the completion of their procreation and child-rearing functions. In the Islamic family these members of an elder generation continue to fulfill an important role in the family throughout their lives and thereby provide service for the other members of the family as well as make their own lives meaningful for the longest possible period of time. Till their last days they are treated with a loving respect in the Islamic 'a'ilah. This respect has the strength of more than mere social convention. It is backed by Qur'ānic directives as well (Qur'ān 17:23-24; 29:8; 31:14; 46:15-18).

The loneliness problems of the unmarried or divorced men and women in our society, the singles crowd, are hardly less crucial as the commentaries on computer dating organizations and singles commercial

establishments give evidence. Their inclusion in an extended family system would provide them an honorable re-entry into societal relationships with reciprocal benefits to all members of the family organization. Whether male or female, whether wage earners or in charge of domestic or child care duties, they could play an important role in an extended family situation. The social activities of that family would prevent the loneliness produced by their exclusion in the nuclear family society.

C. Disintegration of Moral Fibre

A third major problem in contemporary society involves the disintegration of moral fibre. Crimes of every nature and description fill the courts and prisons of our land with culprits and infringe on the peaceful existence of a large segment of the population. Security in the cities of North America has become a dreamed-of luxury known only by past generations. Even leaders of the nation are found to be lacking in the most basic features of honest behavior. There is no doubt that one of the major reasons for this steadily deteriorating situation is our failure to adequately socialize our children. An extended family system could give both men and women the choice of fulfilling themselves in a career or in the family, or in both at different periods of their life, without risking damage to their children, themselves and society by their failing to provide adequate home training for their children. No moral or intellectual training can hope to succeed which is left in the hands of the child's peer group, the schools, the street gangs, or an uncontrolled television set. No feeling of emotional security can be engendered in an adult child whose family members have no time to spend with him. The problems that such "child-rearing" generates will be far greater to parents and society than the inconvenience of less privacy and the curb on individu-

alism that the composite family grouping entails.

It is not only a matter of proper childhood training that contributes to the disintegration of moral fibre. Just as damaging is the mobility and anonymity of our society. Neighborhoods have broken up. Job opportunities propel both men and women from one end of the country to another. Even living within one urban area all one's life can fail to give an individual a feeling of belonging, because of the rapid turnover in neighborhood populations, the consolidated school systems, and the dispersal of citizens for higher education and job opportunities. The individual is forever the stranger among strangers, feeling no pull to conform to the moral and social expectations of old friends and relatives. No one knows him, so he is freed of moral compunctions regarding his deeds and thoughts. The reintegration of such adults into an extended family organization which is mindful of his moral as well as physical welfare could provide great benefit to society as well as to its individual members.

D. The Parent Problem

A fourth problem which confronts society today is the difficulty of parenting our children. According to John Anderson, a director for the Family Services of Detroit and a father himself, "Parents have lost control of their families. They feel inadequate, overwhelmed--I know I do" (quoted by Woodward and Malamud 1975:48). The example of the 'ā'ilāh offers several remedies for the parenting problems with which so many couples or single parents are confronted today. One of these derives from the fact that the greater number of adults available in the home, the more a child has opportunity to spend his time with and be influenced by them rather than by uncertain street influences, television, or his

peer group. It is for this reason that the extended family which has a single residential nucleus usually provides much more effective parenting than the extended family which is residentially dispersed though still bound by commitments of obligation and service.

Secondly, disciplinary problems with children will in fact be far less frequent and severe if the child knows the parent is backed by aunts, uncles, and/or grandparents who are "on-the-scene" to enforce any adult decision. The sheer force of numbers among the adults will in fact be a stabilizing element on juvenile caprice which no husband-wife team or single parent has at his disposal.

Thirdly, the conflict which can sometimes mar the relationship between one adult and a particular child in a nuclear family situation is alleviated when that parent is only one of many adults in the family. In such a circumstance the child can relate to another adult of the same sex as the parent with whom he has difficulty, and in that way avoid any of the psychological problems that might accrue from a similar estrangement in a nuclear family situation.

Fourthly, the generation gap/could be alleviated by an extended family system. There has always been some difference in the thinking of members of different generations. It is quite natural that one views events, actions and ideas in one way at age 10, in another way at age 20, and at still another way at the age of 50. The experience of years has a telling effect on any individual's response. That is not something that any society can hope to change or even wants to remedy. It is even a desirable phenomenon. The generation gap of the late twentieth century, however, has become a problem which causes a serious loss of advisory and

educative help to the younger members of society and a devastating loss of assistance and companionship for its older members. By growing in a socializing atmosphere which provides close contact with members of at least three generations, the children of an extended family/ ^{similar to the 'a'ilah} would be much less likely to reject offhand the influence of the elder generations. The constant presence of some member of another generation would keep every child aware of the wide range of interests and ideas in our multi-generation world and thus give him a better training for his future life. In addition, it would keep the older members of society "young" through constant contact with its junior members.

III. Prerequisites for the Extended Family

Even from such a brief perusal of problems relating to the family which are faced by contemporary society, it is evident that the extended family has many advantages to offer. However, its implementation requires more than the mere realization of its worth by a few social reformers or social planners. It has prerequisites for success which are suggested by the Islamic example.

A. Propaganda Campaign prerequisites

One of these /is a propaganda campaign to counter the heritage of ill will with which the extended family and the interdependence it demands are viewed. /of our contemporaries consider any infringement on individualism and independence as wrong. They fail to realize that it is precisely to the extent that they are dependent /and others are dependent on others on them, to the extent that they feel needed and feel supported by others, that their psychological well-being and their adjustment in society-- in fact, their sanity--depends. A campaign is needed to convince people that even values such as individual freedom are subject to misuse and overemphasis. We must break down the "reluctance to see that the ex-

cessive emphasis upon the isolated individual is the tragedy of modern man, leading inevitably to the dissolution of family unity and family integrity" (Anshen 1959:11).

B. Upgrading of Domestic Roles

Secondly, there is a need for a drastic change in the grading and treatment of domestic roles. Whereas Islamic society views motherhood as the most prestigious role for women, Western liberationists have so downgraded and repudiated the household, the child-bearing and child-rearing roles that no woman feels any longer able to hold her head aloft if she does not have another occupation outside the home--however menial or less beneficial to society, to herself and her family that occupation may be. We have been brainwashed into thinking that only the factory job, the secretarial post, the teaching or executive position demands intelligence, perseverance, and skill. How mistaken we are! And how much our families and all their members are suffering for this blindness! It should be ^{one of} our most important lessons for the coming generations that the job of homemaker is one which demands as much intelligence, perseverance and skill as any job outside the home. We must never underestimate the importance of the domestic roles which mold tomorrow's citizenry at the same time as they maintain today's society. It is time we stopped telling the lazy girl student that she will be good for only cooking or caring for children if she does not improve in her studies. Instead we should give homemaker's and mother's medals!--not just for being a homemaker or for being a biological mother, but for being an exemplary homemaker or mother. If we restore to these roles the importance they deserve, we would fulfill one of the prerequisites of the success of an extended family system and at the same time widen the options for both male and

female members of our society.

C. Decentralization

Another way of ensuring the success of the extended family would be to encourage decentralization in national planning. The goal should be to provide each community with the educational, the economic, and the leisure facilities which would make it possible for young people to stay in their own communities and in their family groups at the end of their secondary schooling. The examples of poor, or of utter lack of, planning in such matters can be seen throughout the world. They can be found in many of the developing nations where "planned economies" are supposed to exist and national governments wield a powerful hand in local affairs. Industry, facilities for higher education, and recreational possibilities are often concentrated in a single center of these countries, while the rest of the nation is devoid of all such opportunities. It is true that the cities of Islamic countries seem to be more conglomerations of villages than cities in the Western sense (see infra, pp. 19-20); yet the separation from the residential family of the village is not a thing to be encouraged. Countries like Egypt, India and the Philippines not only suffer a brain drain to Western countries; they even suffer a brain drain from countryside and village to Cairo, New Delhi and Manila. A provincial leader from the island of Mindanao in the Philippines remarked that the local village community from which he comes is no longer encouraged to finance students to go to Manila for higher education--not to speak of sending them to America. Once outside the confines of the village, with its dearth of job, education and recreation opportunities, the young men and women are reluctant to return to serve their communities which need them so desperately.

In our own country, where organization of productive and consumptive facilities receives less direction from the government than it does in many other nations, one would not expect to find the imbalance of opportunities remedied. Actually, we are all well aware of the discrepancies in opportunities that helped clog the cities and depopulate the countryside of America. If each community could share a measure of the nation's facilities for education, employment and recreation, there would be little need for the enforced mobility which plagues our society today and will be the disease of all developing countries tomorrow if they do not learn from our experience. Unless we can provide a stability to families and communities, we risk the dangers of continuing in a situation which has been compared to the ills suffered by a nomadic population or the families of migrant farm workers (Woodward and Malamud 1975:53).

It might be argued that such decentralization involves tremendous amounts of money in relocation and industrial transportation costs. But the cost in human suffering and the irreparable damage to society which the concentration in a few major cities has brought are much more costly--costly in human life and well-being, and also costly in dollars and cents. Each year millions are spent on crime detection, on public welfare and on incarcerating deviant citizens, in addition to the money spent repairing the damage to our ecological resources which results from these over-concentrations of population.

D. Legal Benefits

A fourth stimulus that could aid the implementation of an extended family system and thereby alleviate some of our contemporary social problems are laws regarding taxes and support that would encourage members of an extended family to maintain their needy kin regardless of

age. Islamic family laws of inheritance and maintenance have played an important role in the structure and function of the family in Muslim society. New legislation in the West might include such features as tax concessions for families supporting three or more generations, inheritance laws providing not only for wife and children but for other members of the extended family as well, and provisions making well-off members of a family legally responsible for the welfare of its needy kin.

E. Housing

Housing requisites for the larger families would be different from those of the nuclear family, but this requirement is one that is perhaps most easy to fulfill. Just as the larger homes of the last century, which accommodated the larger families prevalent at that time, were divided into small apartments, they could be reopened to accommodate larger families. More modern homes could be expanded by the addition of rooms and removal of partitions to expand interiors.

IV. The Future of the Extended Family in Islamic Society

Now that some of the benefits and prerequisites of the extended family have been presented, it becomes clear that we have something important to learn from a study of the 'ā'ilah and the kinship organization of the Muslim peoples. Such a study necessitates not only a description of its contemporary manifestations, but a thorough knowledge of the Qur'ānic injunctions and the examples from the life of the Prophet which grounded it, the laws governing it, and its historical development through the past thirteen and a half centuries. It is also important to understand present day developments in that family and to understand their effect on the society and its individual members. It is our intention in this last section of the present paper to focus on the contemporary scene,

22
B

Will the Women's Liberation Movement Disrupt the Extended Family in Muslim Society?

If women's liberation means, as it does in the West, the rejection of any differentiation between male and female roles; if it means, as it seems to mean in the West, a refusal of the interdependence, the mutual responsibilities and dependencies that Islamic marriage and family relationships demand, the effect on the 'a'ilah of increased importance or wholesale adoption by Islamic society could be disastrous.

of the movement in the M.C.

However, if women's liberation can espouse different goals in different societies--as I feel sure it must, to be relevant; if women's liberation can mean a return to the spirit of the Qur'anic injunctions concerning women's religious, social, and political equality, there is no reason to feel that such a liberation would be dangerous to the Islamic family system. A stress on equal responsibilities for actions by women as well as men (Qur'an 3:195; 4:124; 33:35-6), the equal need for their education and knowledge, their equal rights in divorce (Qur'an 2:228), their freedom of expression and participation in public life, their right to earn a living and to enjoy the proceeds as an independent individual (Qur'an 4:32), their right to a just share of the inheritance of their parents (Qur'an 4:7); their right to their dower and to maintenance by men (Qur'an 4:25; 4:34)--all these are rights granted to women in the seventh century by Islam. They make the situation of Muslim women in some parts of the Muslim world today, not only surprising and lamentable, but truly un-Islamic. A women's liberation which returned to those rights/women need not be detrimental to the extended family. It should indeed have the salutary effect of renewing and revivifying the participation and contribution of every female member of that kinship organization.

B

of both sexes
women's right to be contributing
of their labor
a self environment

If our Islamic goals for a woman based society are in view, a reinstatement of the rights of women is required

would indeed be a liberation of only of
but liberation of men & children
whole
to local

Research these questions of...
of the world...
of the world...
of the world...

NOTES

1 Also designated as "joint" (Fuller 1970), "corporate" (Blitsten 1963), or "composite" (Murdock 1949). Murdock has further divided the "composite" family into "polygynous" and "extended." In the structure of the Islamic family these two qualities can be co-existent.

2 "There is thus, in spite of local variety, a considerable unity in the cultural pattern of Islam throughout the whole area inhabited by the almost 300 million Muslims today. It is therefore possible to present an account of the family in Islam which, while primarily relevant to Arabia and its immediate neighbors, will in general hold true of Muslim communities wherever they are found" (Jeffery 1959:202-3).

3 The only major exception to patrilineal descent is found among the Tuareg in the Sahara (Patai 1969:86).

4 This is especially significant since Arabic is unusually rich in terminology relating to the family. "The importance of the family and of family life is expressed, among other manifestations, in the extremely rich terminology centered around the family and used in the everyday colloquial in Arab countries" (Patai 1969:113). Fakhouri equates the term bait with the nuclear family, but he admits that he has assigned this term arbitrarily for the sake of clarity (Fakhouri 1972:55).

... ended in divorce (Adams 1973:334). ... figures, there is now one divorce for nearly every ... in the United States, with rates rising rapidly among families with children. Last year the parents of more than one million children in the United States were divorced (Woodward and Malamud 1975).

E. What Would a Trend Toward Functional Rather Than Residential Extension of the Family Have on the 'A'ilah?

Among the Westernized Muslims of some urban areas in the Muslim World and of most Muslim families in Western Europe and the Americas, a trend from the residentially extended family to the functionally extended / can be noticed. It has been proven that in many cases the functionally extended family in Muslim society has the same structure and performs the same functions as its residentially nucleated counterpart. A Muslim sociologist writes that "The family members may reside in one and the same place or make separate and independent arrangements. Whatever pattern they chose will be of little consequence as far as their mutual role expectations are concerned" (Abdal-Ati 1974:39).

There can be no doubt, however, that the greater the residential separation, and the less frequent the activities shared by and the contacts between its members, the more difficulty the 'a'ilah will have in maintaining its cohesiveness. It will be interesting to see if this trend toward functional extension ^{or any extended family organization} continues and what effect it may have on the 'a'ilah. If it ^{does not detract} continues to be merely a matter of convenience and role expectations are not forsaken, it may prove to have little effect on the Islamic family. If, on the other hand, it is a ^{harbinger} sign of ^{increasing} rising individualism and diminishing interdependencies, it ^{could be the tool of} will mark a drastic change in Muslim society in the years to come. The trend is therefore one to be watched closely by Muslim social planners, as well as by Western social scientists.

It is a sign of social scientists who are not interested in the study of the family.

The Muslim peoples is taken as a model for features of possible change that might alleviate the difficulties faced by contemporary American society.

the Muslim peoples is taken as a model for features of possible change that might alleviate the difficulties faced by contemporary American society.

document

The 'ā'ilah is defined by describing its composition and the contrasting roles of its male and female members. In a second section it enumerates some of the problems facing contemporary society in North America—the definition of women's role, loneliness, the deterioration of moral standards, the parenting or socialization of children. A third section shows how these problems could be alleviated by an extended family system similar to that of the Islamic 'ā'ilah. A fourth section describes some constructive steps for bringing such a family into being in North American Society. These include a propaganda campaign to change public opinion regarding the benefits and obligations of an extended family system; a reappraisal of the worth of women's contribution in their roles as mothers and wives; decentralization of educational, economic and leisure facilities, enactment of laws to benefit members of extended family units, and suggestions for housing changes to correspond to altered residential patterns.

adoption of 2-2 of

Lois Ibsen al Faruqi

This is a revised version of a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 24-26, 1975.