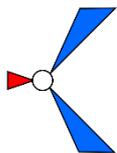


797 EA

bncdoc.id	CDX
bncdoc.author	Holton, Patricia
bncdoc.year	1991
bncdoc.title	Mother without a mask.
bncdoc.info	Mother without a mask. Sample containing about 41083 words from a book (domain: belief and thought)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_biography

<797/c>	or joining a group demanded a blessing. ‘God’s peace be with you all.’ As for the children, ‘Hi, Mom’ would be as startling as a bikini. Every morning and every afternoon after siestas, the children and young people were expected to greet their mothers, grandmothers and aunts with a kiss in the centre of the forehead. For fathers, grandfathers and uncles there was the nose kiss. This strange greeting is used in this particular part of Arabia and parts of Oman, not the northern Gulf nor the inland deserts of Saudi Arabia. Hands at the sides, nose quickly touches nose one to three times. Men greet their friends this way, women greet their women friends. ‘Where did this come from? Why?’ I had asked. ‘Perhaps it is because the nose is the first part of you to come forward. And you can be dignified still. An embrace is more intimate,’ was the answer. Who knows? One thing is sure. It is an ancient form of recognition that civilisation drowns. Here in the Abu Dhabi/Al Ain area it was both a statement and a signature used only by those whose lives were rooted in the place. As we sat waiting, each wrapped in her own morning thoughts, a small three-year-old girl came quietly through the door, dragging a piece of black veiling behind her. It was Amina , one of the Sheikha’s foster daughters . Intensely shy but always wanting to be good, she went round the ‘table’, kissing each one of us and hoping for a hug in return. The veil was her security blanket. She was never without it. The second foster daughter soon followed, coming in with a bound. Miriam was five and about as different from Amina as possible. Extroverted, quick and full of enthusiasm, she hopped about the carpet without a word of greeting to anyone. No-one scolded her . Scoldings were reserved for more serious offences. Although many children were fostered, especially girls , few were adopted. True adoption is rare. Adoptive children should nurse at the breast of one of the immediate family in order to have the freedom of the family when they are adult. They are then accepted as true brothers or sisters. Marriage between a blood son and an adopted daughter who had nursed at the same breast would be incestuous, haram - forbidden. Miriam had been an orphaned refugee child brought from the Lebanon at the Sheikha’s request. Amina had been orphaned in the Emirates. Both were kissed and cuddled and bandied about like special toys. In most of the hareems there were usually
 <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>two or more of these little girls</p>
	<p>. Sheikhas were always looking for homeless orphans to take under their wing. There was one wonderful story of a little Pakistani girl of some four to five years who accidentally wandered on to the edge of the Abu Dhabi-Dubai road. A Sheikha passing in her stretched Mercedes saw the child and picked her up. The little girl seemed to have been abandoned, so the Sheikha took her home, cared for her and made all the necessary preparations to keep her. Only when the police and parents advertised the child’s disappearance was the mistake discovered and the child returned to her family. In any event, that is the story. Miriam and Amina were not foundlings. A careful search had been made for two orphaned children whom the Sheikha could foster and love as her own. These two lucky little girls were chosen.</p>

They were being brought up with the same affection the Sheikha gave her own daughter. All these little girls ate their meals in the Sheikha's majlis with their nurses - in the nursery, so to speak. They would n't join the grown-ups for a good many years, though the Sheikha's daughter had been my meal companion before I myself had been accepted by the 'grown-ups,. Once the little ones had left the room, I shifted my position on the floor and sat cross-legged, trying to cover the soles of my feet with my skirt. It is as rude as spitting to turn the soles of your feet toward anyone, so stretching your legs in front of you becomes nearly impossible. Leg cramp, therefore, is always imminent. This, plus the fact that sitting tahat - down on the carpet - is no excuse to lounge, makes it a problem for me. You are supposed to sit up with a straight back. In fact the back should be straight at all times. My back with its two slipped discs sometimes ached unmercifully. Indeed one of my more embarrassing moments was when a child was told not to sit like Um Yusef. In Arabic, of course, thinking I did n't understand. Shame. Shame on me. When the Sheikha finally arrived we all rose to greet her. We always rose to greet each other. They did it easily. I was always getting my feet caught on my hems. Breakfast was my favourite meal as it was the easiest for me to eat. I had become quite skilled with harees, that glutinous porridge of lamb and cracked wheat which I had met at my first meal bedu style. Bilaleet was less enjoyable for me as I could n't get used to sweet vermicelli, but then I never liked