

How well do we know the arab culture

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The Arabs have rich culture and traditions viewed differently from westerners. Given this, it becomes important to understand and respect Arab culture in order to bridge the gap of misinterpretations and conflicts particularly when one is dealing with business and or visiting the Arab countries. In many instances, as related by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, (OFDCSI) Arab culture sets them apart with westerners. Accordingly, there are about 200 million Arabs located worldwide. Most of them reside in 22 Arab countries in the Middle East but surprisingly, not all Arabs are Muslims. This finding belies thinking that all Arabs are Muslims because there are Arab Christians found in many places of the Arab world, and only between 15-18% of Arabs are Muslims. Certain beliefs in culture and tradition are found to be untrue in document presented by the OFDCSI. For instance, for a long time, I held on to the idea that Arab males are wealthy oil magnates, terrorists and mad dictators and any association with them are dangerous. These are types of perceptions that are most common with lack of understanding. Facts from research disprove this and showed that Arabs have diverse economic segments of population and there are also poor people among them. Because of terrorism that relates to Arabs, I perceived them to be mad dictators and have nothing in mind but bring chaos to the western world. Readings from OFDCSI again proved me wrong as madness cannot thrive in different political system adhered to by Arabs; they could not be terrorists because majority of the citizens are law abiding, keep families and employed in variety of occupations. Arabs are concerned about modesty, and that is the reason why Arab women are clothed in full length cover, and most devoted women could be seen covering even their faces. Traditional garbs for men are robes, but

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headaddresses indicate the tribe from which they belong. Today, according to OFDCSI, Arab men wear a mix of western clothing because now they wear t-shirts and jeans along with traditional garb.

Arab women differ with western culture when it comes to subordination to men. OFDCSI refers to this culture as being subordinate to men in varying degrees; for instance it is very restrictive in Arabian Peninsula and undisturbed in urban areas of Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. It is expected that foreigners respect the privacy of women role in Arab world. Respect is standard norm as men rise up when a woman enters the room; men should not shake hands with Arab women unless the women offer it first. There are so many don'ts when it comes to communication with women: one should not hug or flirt with Arab women, one should not talk to professional women in public unless it is business related and/or until one is formally introduced. To Arabs, family is the center of their life and tightly-knitted; they value, honor and respect to elders. As aptly described by OFDCSI, Arabs like big families and a son is favored than a daughter. This inclination is premised on the idea that a son is expected to take care of elders when they grow old; a son brings honor to the family while they believe daughters bring shame. Honor is given importance and is defended at all costs, where shame is taken seriously and should be avoided. Sometimes, an answer of “ I don't know” is construed as offensive and constructive criticism, an insult. Summing up, Arab culture revolves in faith and beliefs, treating family first, giving importance to justice and equality, paranoid attitude, desire for modernity hampered by traditions and having an atomistic attitude. They are paranoids because they feel Westerners always have intent to own their lands.

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Reference

Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence (January 2006). Arab cultural awareness: 58 fact sheets TRADOC DCSINT Handbook No. 2. Viewed 29 September, 2011 For this essay, you may either discuss the relevance of the Arabic history/geography to the evolution of the Arab culture in its current state or discuss two or three cultural practices that are influenced by history/geography. Your answer should be in the form of an essay (two double-spaced pages).