

Arabian traditions in ottoman empire history essay

[History](#), [Empires](#)



The Ottoman Empire's culture evolved over a number of years as the ruling Turks administration adapted, absorbed, and modified the traditions of their people and those of conquered lands. According to Faroghi (2005) the Ottoman Empire experienced strong influence from languages, customs, and traditions from societies of Islamic origin, particularly Arabic, whereas Persian culture had a considerable contribution via the strongly Persianized Seljuq Turks administration. However, the Arabian religion, Islam, had already spread far-and-wide in Anatolia before the establishment of the empire, and therefore the Ottoman Empire became an Islamic polity. Moreover, between the 14th and 16th centuries, Islam spread to the central Hungary and Balkan Peninsula with Ottoman conquest. Apparently, the Ottoman sultans did not attempt to enforce religious uniformity (p. 23)

Discussion

The Arabian religion was dominant in the empire and this was reflected by the political structure. As a matter of fact, non-Muslims hardly held military command or regular political office. Moreover, the entire empire was covered by a network of Muslim courts, thus, cases involving Muslims and non-Muslims were heard in these courts under the principle that non-Muslims were not allowed to testify against Muslims. The Arabian religion, Islam, dominated and influenced the political culture of the Ottoman Empire. In many respects, hence, the acceptance of Islamic law gave the Ottoman Empire its distinctive form (Agoston & Master, 2009, p. 36).

Islam formed the basis of Arabian traditions which greatly influenced the culture of the Ottoman Empire. Arabic had acquired role in the Ottoman

Empire by the 14th century as a language of science and revelation, and anyone seeking knowledge of God had to study it. In the same context, the Arabic language formed the basis of Ottoman literature genre and the central curriculum of the Empire. People who had studied the language enjoyed grand prestige because they formed a respected class within the Ottoman Empire. In reference to Agoston and Masters (2009), " Seekers of knowledge held great legal, political, and spiritual power (p. 82). On a different note, the traditional Arabic schools (madrasa) were established all over the empire with the aim of teaching Islamic religion and culture to its people. The Ulema Islam founded the basis of Ottoman visual art, literature, and music (Agoston & Masters, 2009, p. 84).

The Arabic literature which was widely used in the Ottoman Empire produced both poetry and prose. However, this form of literature was greatly influenced by the Qur'an especially during the seventh century. According to Faroghi (2005) " Most of the poems and songs were not necessarily written in Arabic alphabet but were written by Arabic language speakers (p. 26). Actually, most of the songs and poems were based on stories about the writer's lives and political tribe. In addition, poetry and music were used to advertise people, the strength of a king, and wealth. On the other hand, there were songs based on the messages of the holy Quran and were used to teach people important aspects of their religion.

However, the Ottoman Empire culture which was influenced mainly by Arabic tradition focused on family and religion. The inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire held family in very high esteem. Women were required to remain

respectful and submissive to the men, and their work was mainly to bring forth children and take care of the home. Moreover, the women were also required to dress decently in long dresses and cover their heads with scarf always. Surprisingly, the Muslim women in the Ottoman Empire were not allowed to expose any part of their body including the face to any other man besides their husbands. Hand shaking with a person of the opposite sex was also highly prohibited and was punishable since it was considered immoral. They were also expected to keep themselves as virgins until marriage and those who broke this law were heavily punished (Faroghi, 2005, p. 126). The Arabic culture of women applying henna was also practiced by the Ottoman Empire women. In relation to Agoston & Masters (2009), Henna was used as a symbol of sensuality, good luck, and health in the Ottoman Empire and the Arabic world. Women used paste made from simply dried and ground henna leaves to decorate their feet and hands. The decoration designs ranged from intricate geometric patterns to simple blobs designed to attract good energy, ward off evil, and promote fertility (p. 37).

In the Ottoman Empire, the issue of arranged marriages also existed, although the two parties involved were allowed to consent to the marriage freely. However, the Muslims in the Ottoman Empire only practiced traditional Arabic marriages that were performed by religious leaders. In reference to Faroghi (2005), marriage played a key role in the social lives of the Ottoman Empire people because it was meant to unite the two families as much as it joined the couple. On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire people adopted the Arabian patriarchal structure in which the father (the patriarch) was the head of the family and responsible for the family's well-

being in all aspects. For instance, the patriarch was expected to protect the family from any attacks as well as provide food and other basic needs (p. 123).

Needless to say, the Islamic inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire were prohibited from eating certain food just like it is in the Arabian culture. Such inhabitants were not allowed to eat pork because it was believed to be ungodly and if some one ate it by chance, then they would pray and ask God for forgiveness. However, in accordance with Agoston & Masters (2009), Arabian foods and recipes dominated some parts of the Ottoman Empire. Beverages such as coffee were widely used in the empire. Arabian dishes such as rice and dried fruits were very common in the Ottoman Empire (p. 102).

Conclusion/Recommendations

Fundamentally, the Arabian traditions had a great influence on the culture and customs of the Ottoman Empire. The Islamic religion formed the basis of the political, religious, and legal systems. Consequently, most Arabian traditions became predominant in the Ottoman Empire. However, it's equally important to review the customs and traditions of Arabian countries during the early centuries so as to understand Arabic traditions in the Ottoman Empire at length and at a deeper dimension.