

МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ РФ
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«THE ARAB WORLD»

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UNIT 1

LEAD IN

Make a list of words that may be connected with the topic “Arab world”.

READING

Ex. 1. Skim through the article fairly quickly and tell the audience its main idea.

Arabs

The Arab world is usually considered to be comprised of the following nineteen countries: Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Chad, Lebanon, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Yemen. There are also significant Arab populations in Iran, Turkey, East Africa, South America, Europe, and Southeast Asia. The total population of Arabs in the world is roughly 160 million (Eickelman 1987), or about 3 percent of the world's population. This large ethnic group has a very heterogeneous population, but there are a number of characteristics that a majority of Arabs share.

Perhaps the most common Arab characteristic is adherence to the Islamic faith. Muslim Arabs comprise about 93 percent of the Arab population and belong to several different sects including Shia (Ithna Ashari and Ismaili), Alawi, Zaidi, and Sunni, which is the largest. The other 7 percent of Arabs are largely Christian or Druze.

The link between Arabs and Islam has deep historical roots. It was among Arabs early in the seventh century that Mohammed preached the tenets of Islam. Mohammed's successors quickly spread the word of Allah into Southwest Asia, across North Africa and into Spain, into Persia, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, and to the east coast of Africa. Wherever Muslims went, they left elements of Arab culture along with their religion. The cultures of the assimilated territories, which included Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian populations, were not only influenced by the Arab invaders and their religion, but, in turn, substantially influenced the nature of Arab culture.

The conquered populations were subjugated politically, but their administrative skills, crafts, arts, and worldviews gradually transformed their conquerors. This transformation of Arab identity and tradition has been a

UNIT 2

LEAD IN

What language styles do you know? When do we use them?

READING

Ex. 1. Read the text and say what new facts you have learned from the article.

Language

Another important and unifying characteristic of Arabs is a common language. Arabic, like Hebrew, is a Semitic language of the Afro-Asiatic Family. Evidence of its first use appears in accounts of wars in 853 B.C. Arabic became a high-status language in the early Islamic centuries. It also became widely used in trade and commerce. Over the centuries, it became the predominant religious language of the world's Muslims. Even though most Muslims cannot speak Arabic today, it is revered as the language that God chose to reveal the Quran, and, because of this, it has profoundly influenced the language and thought of all Muslims.

Arabic has developed into at least two distinct forms. Classical Arabic is the religious and literary language. It is spoken and written throughout the Arab world and serves as a bond among all literate Muslims. Colloquial Arabic, an informal spoken language, varies by dialect from region to region, and is not always mutually intelligible. Both forms of the language are in use today and provide an important force for Arab cohesion.

Politics

Although unified by language and some cultural attributes, Arabs have been politically divided since the first Islamic centuries. With the rise of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century, most of the Arabic-speaking regions of the Middle East and North Africa were turned into Ottoman provinces. There were relatively few economic, political, or intellectual achievements that were inherently Arab during Ottoman rule. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, there were some attempts to emulate the perceived achievements of European civilization. It was at this time that the idea of Arabism, perhaps as a counterpart to European nationalist movements, began to emerge. It was not until after World War II, however, that Arabs once again ruled their own lands, and by then the imported system of political nationalism had divided the Arabs into separate states, which undermined the political unity (i.e., the Arabism), of the ethnic group as a whole.

Arab culture developed in the desert among the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula, who lived either as tribal nomads or town folk. Town folk were strongly influenced by Bedouin values and practices. Mohammed was a townsman, but his tribe, the Quraysh, included many Bedouin, and Mohammed and his followers

adhered to many pre-Islamic tribal traditions. These traditions, arising within the harsh environment of the desert, included strict codes of proper economic and social behavior, which were legitimized by Islam and became part of Arab culture.

Traditionally, Bedouin moved often, living in tents and earning their living as stock breeders, transporters, or traders. They produced the livestock for much of the sedentary Arab world, raising camels, horses, and donkeys as beasts of burden and sheep and goats for food, clothing, and manure. As transporters, they moved products from the countryside to towns and between settlements not connected by roads. As traders, they provided a link between villages and towns, bringing to the villagers manufactured utensils and products that were not available locally. Their relationships with settled people were based on reciprocity and followed carefully defined rules of protocol.

A completely different facet of Arab culture developed along the Mediterranean shore, where Arabs had direct contact with the cultures of Europe. Compromise replaced rigidity, and religious fundamentalism gave way to accommodation and the acceptance of new ideas. There were thriving economies in the cities of Beirut, Cairo, Alexandria, Tunis, Algiers, and Casablanca, which offered the traditional Arab the possibility of entering new professions. Attending universities became an option for a changing population. European-styled nationalism replaced tribal allegiance and European imperialism.

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Ex. 2. Find the English equivalents for the following:

Стать доминирующим языком, разговорный арабский язык, горожанин, суровые условия пустыни, животновод, домашний скот, сельская местность, непреклонность, лояльность.

Ex. 3. Mark the sentences T (true) or F (false).

1. Arabic has developed into Classical Arabic which was the religious and literary language.
2. Colloquial Arabic, an informal spoken language, varies by dialect from region to region; however it is always understandable by whole population of Arab countries.
3. Arabs started to rule their own lands after World War II.
4. Bedouin provided a link between villages and towns.

Ex. 4 Answer the questions:

1. What spheres was Arabic language used in the early Islamic centuries in?
2. What is the difference between classical and colloquial Arabic language?
3. What is the role of Ottoman Empire in the history of Arabic-speaking countries?

4. Where did Bedouin live and what did they produce?
5. Which part of Arab culture countries is completely different? Why?
6. In your opinion, how does European culture influence the Arab one? Give some examples.

FOLLOW-UP

Ex. 5.

Make a summary of the article.

Ex. 6.

- a) Make a presentation dedicated to Arabic.**
- b) Make a presentation dedicated to specific features of politics in different Arab countries.**

UNIT 3

LEAD IN

What is the difference between urban and rural life? Discuss your answer with the group.

READING

Ex. 1.

Read the article and say what new facts you have learned about Arab everyday life.

Urban Life

About half of Muslim Arabs live in cities and towns. They have a greater variety of occupations, weaker family ties, greater freedom for women to leave the home, fewer arranged marriages, and fewer social pressures to conform to religious practices than do nonurban Arabs. The social structure of the urban Muslim Arab is considerably more complex than that of his desert or village counterpart.

Arabs who live in towns are also experiencing changes in their traditional patterns of living, but to a lesser degree than the city dwellers. Nomads, villagers, and urban traders meet in the *suq* (marketplace) to exchange goods and products. Representatives of government agencies (e.g., tax collectors, army conscripts,

police, and irrigation officers) make contacts with most of the population in the towns.

The townspeople are disdainful of the villagers. Town residents are more religiously conservative and more intimately involved in their kin network than urban dwellers are. The ideal values of the nomad are not so strong in the town. There is less concern with hospitality and defiance and more concern with symbols of economic prosperity—property, wealth, and education. Family honor remains important, however, and women continue to live a secluded life under the watchful eyes of husbands, brothers, and fathers.

Rural Life

Most Arabs are farmers who live between the two extremes of the desert on the one hand, with its conservative rigidity, and the cities and towns on the other hand, with their changing traditions and practices. The Arab village is usually composed of walled, mud-floored homes built of mud bricks. These homes hide the villagers' insecurities from strangers and provide an intimate environment in which strong family ties are nurtured.

Arab villagers grow only what they need to eat or trade—cereal grains, vegetables, livestock, and cotton. They are often in debt, and seldom have enough money to pay off their debts or to save for investments. Villagers live by tradition and lack the incentives, knowledge, or security to make changes. Change is seen as disruptive and threatening to the harmonious relationship that Arabs have established with their environment and their fellow villagers. Village values stem from the ideal values of the nomad. Unlike the Bedouin, villagers will relate to non-kin, but loyalty to the group is as strong as it is among the tribesmen. As among the Bedouin, village segments may also feud with each other. Similarly, standards of hospitality are high among villagers, as is awareness of family honor. The villager lives in an extended family in which family life is tightly controlled. Each family member has a defined role, and there is little individual deviation. Like the Bedouin, the villager finds security in the family during times of economic hardship and in old age. Changes in individual roles, such as when a son goes off to work in a town, often weaken the family socioeconomic system.

Children are a family's greatest asset, providing the parents with a work force and social security. The patrilineal system is reflected by Islamic rules of inheritance, which give more to boys than to girls, particularly in terms of real estate. A girl's value is linked to her function of tying one family to another through marriage, and to her primary role as a mother. Births are celebrated, particularly those of boys. Births are often accompanied by non-Islamic rituals such as burying the placenta to protect the mother and baby from enemy spirits or dressing boys as girls to deceive evil spirits. A child's first possession is often an amulet to ward off malevolence, and the first word a baby hears is "Allah."

Arab boys and girls are treated very differently. Boys are given great affection and are pampered by their mothers. Girls are also given affection, but are weaned much earlier than boys and are not pampered. A mother is viewed as a symbol of warmth and love throughout a child's life. A father is viewed as a stern disciplinarian who administers corporal punishment and instills a degree of fear

within his children. Boys are especially taught—often harshly—to obey and respect older males.

Children are given adult responsibilities and sex-specific socialization early in life. Boys work in the fields, and girls help their mothers cook and care for siblings. Adolescents have no contact with the opposite sex outside the family, and girls are watched closely to protect their chastity. A girl's primary protector is her older brother, who continues to watch over his sister even after she is married.

Marriages are arranged by parents. Girls marry between the ages of 14 and 19, whereas boys are usually somewhat older. Marriages establish important ties within one's own kin group or with other lineages that have economic or status advantages. Marriage is endogamous within one's kin group. The preferred match is between brothers' children. Bride and groom often meet for the first time on the day of the wedding, when the bride-wealth (*mahr*) is determined and a marriage contract is signed.

The lives of Arab village men and women are very distinct. Men work in the fields, women in the home. For social contact, men go to coffee houses, but women visit neighbors and relatives or receive such visits in their own homes. Men and women often eat separately, and they always pray separately.

Arab villagers follow a mixture of Islamic folk beliefs and rituals. Religion provides explanation for many unknown and uncontrollable events in their lives. God's will dictates the direction of life and provides divine authority for action. Religion confirms changes in social status, for example, at circumcision and marriage. It provides hope for a better life after death. Religious festivals, such as 'Id al-Adhha, 'Id al-Fitr and, for Shia Arabs, Muharram, break the monotony of village life. Men worship at a mosque. Women, often not allowed in mosques, attend ceremonies conducted in a home by female religious leaders.

Cultural Change

Change is occurring at a rapid pace throughout the Arab world. The Bedouin have had to deal with the many changes arising from oil-based economies—oil fields, trucks, and other forms of transportation, for example. Road building has also decreased the degree of isolation of thousands of villages and increased the number of contacts between villagers and the outside world. Radios bring new ideas to Bedouin and villager alike. Land reform has brought new systems of landownership, agricultural credit, and new farming technology. Overcrowding and diminishing economic opportunities in the village have prompted many villagers to migrate to the towns and cities. Migration from poorer Arab countries to oil-rich states has also become an economic opportunity and an important source of revenue for millions of Arabs.

COMPREHENSION CHECK