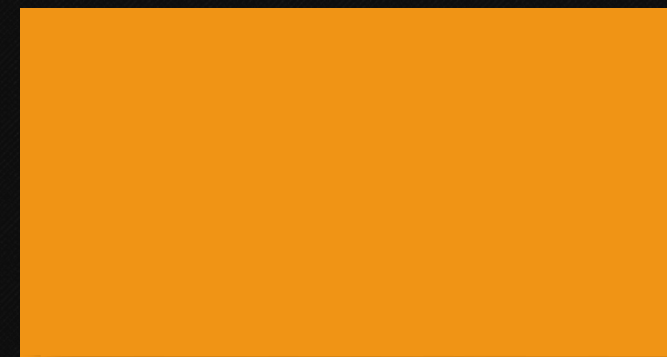




# Middle Eastern Culture



## In today's topic:

- How can we understand Middle East Culture?
- What are the different ethnicities in the Middle East?
- What languages are spoken in the Middle East today?
- What are the Common Middle Eastern Society's Customs & Norms?
- What are the Common Middle Eastern Characteristics?



# How can we understand Middle East Cultures?

❑ To understand the Middle East & N. Africa Cultures, we need to know the following:

1. Ethnicities
2. Languages
3. Religions
4. Customs and Norms
5. Politics



# The Middle East & N. Africa are a Crossroads of Civilization

- Most of the countries in this region are multiethnic.
- Major ethnic groups in the Middle East today include **Arabs, Iranians, Turks, Jews (Israelis), Kurds**, and many other minor native groups such as: **Coptic Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans**.
- This diversity enhanced the cultural richness of society, but it led to many **political** and **religious** conflicts.



# Language

What Languages Are Spoken in the  
Middle East Today?



# What Languages Are Spoken in the Middle East Today?

- Arabic
- Turkish
- Farsi
- Hebrew
- Assyrian - Aramaic
- Kurdish

➤ The Arabic language is the world's sixth most common language.

➤ **Every Muslim** in the world should be at least literate in the **Arabic** language to be able to recite the Qur'an.



There are three Major Religions of the  
Middle East

**Judaism**

**Christianity**

**Islam**

# The Middle East Society

- **The family** is an important part of the culture in the Middle East.
- A common thread that runs through many lives is the importance of family and the values that derive from having a strong extended family: **Respect, Honor & Loyalty.**
- In traditional Arab societies, the family unit is an extended family—cousins, grandparents, second cousins, cousins-in-law, nieces, nephews, and more—all living together.
- Migration to cities has broken up some of these extended families.





# The Middle East Society

- Children are greatly valued
- First Born rights and responsibilities.
- Respect and care for the elderly.
- The individual achievement is how the family is perceived.
- The women's primary role is to care for her husband and children.
- Adults do not reason with children.





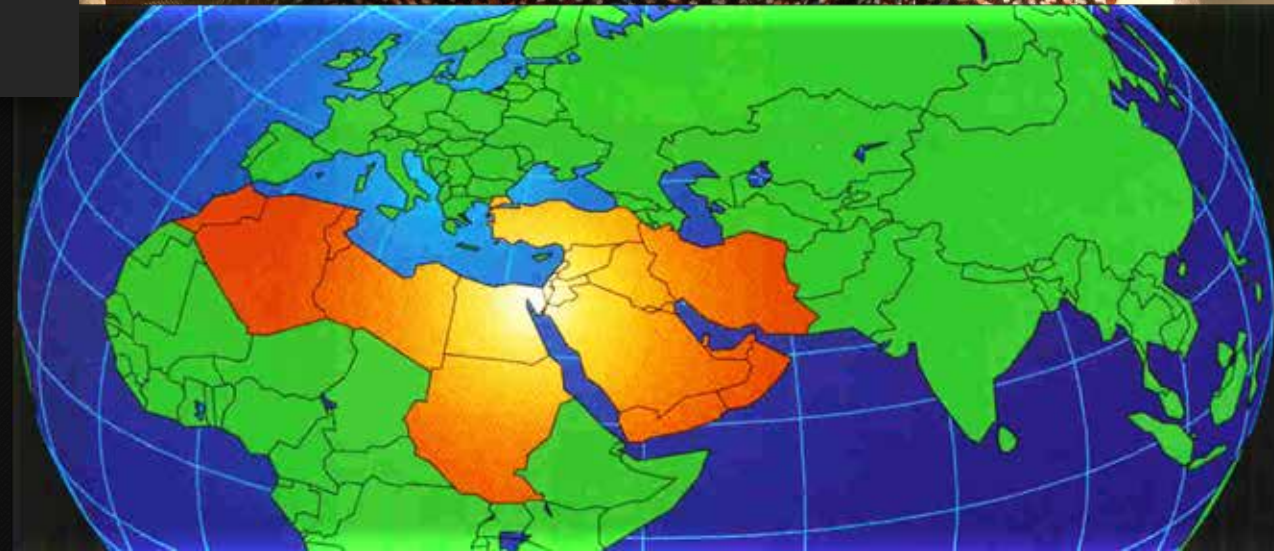
# Social Norms

- The public display of intimacy between men and women is considered offensive.
- This code also applies to husbands and wives.
- No sex before marriage.
- An engagement period varies between 6 months to two years, depending on financials.
- A person's and family's reputation is essential in marriage.
- Parents' approval is essential.
- Most Middle Easterners still prefer arranged marriages.
- More flexible about timelines, i.e., sleeping, eating, training.





# Women in the Modern Middle East







# Status of Women in the Middle East

- Statements on women's status vary in applicability depending on the country involved.
- For instance, in Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, educated women have been very active at all levels of society.
- But, in countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, Libya, and Afghanistan, there are many rigid restrictions as Islamic laws are literally implemented.
- But in the countryside, it is not the same.

# Status of Women in the Middle East

- In the Persian Gulf States, most women do not work.
- Those who do, work only in all-female environments, such as schools and banks for women, except those in the medical profession.



# Women Status in Saudi Arabia and similar Countries

- Able to attend universities (separated from men)
- Work in female-only occupations
- Can keep their own name when married
- Property protected
- Could not drive until changed in 2018
- Must wear hijab
- Can only marry a Muslim
- Can only divorce if granted by the man or approved by court
- Cannot talk to men outside their family
- Gained right to vote in 2004







Saudi Arabia forbids women to eat while publicly exposed. All restaurants, have 'family areas' where women can eat behind the curtains.

# Women Status in the Middle East

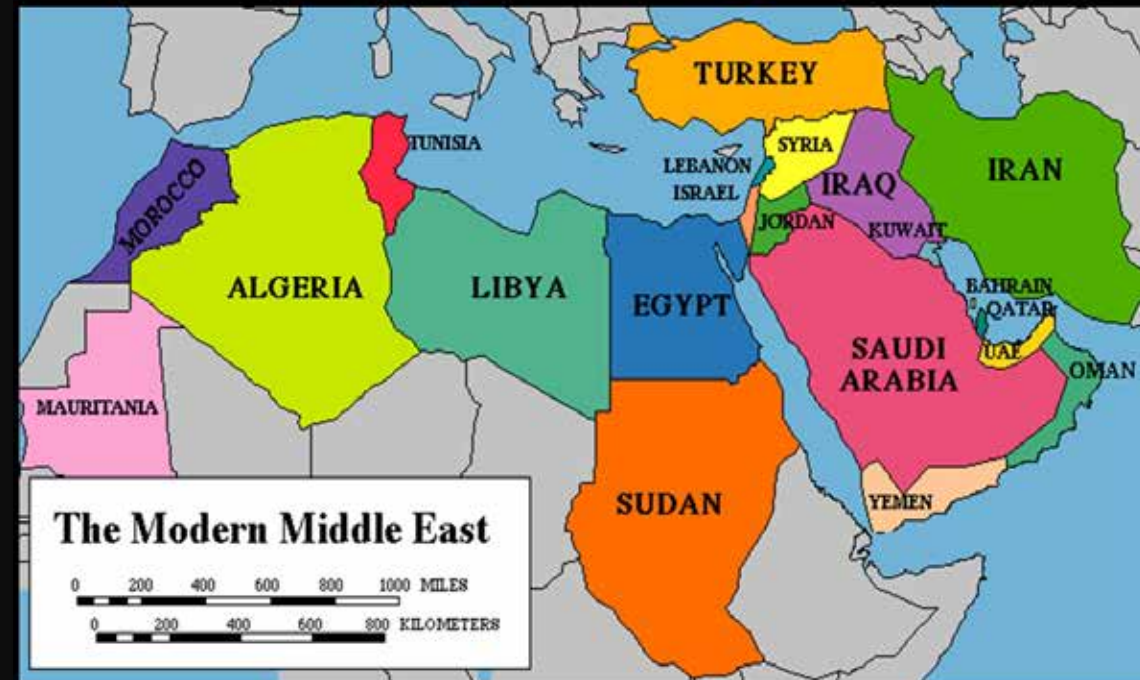
## **The fact is; there are:**

- Fewer women than men in public life.
- Fewer women than men in the public workforce.
- Lower rates of female education & higher rates of female illiteracy.
- It is a patriarchal system in the home and public life.



# Women's Status in other Countries is much better

- **Kuwait:**
  - Women are allowed to vote, but not run for office
- **Turkey:**
  - Women wear western styles of clothes
- **Jordan:**
  - Women are the majority in medical schools
- **Syria:**
  - Female lawyers, doctors, teachers, etc.





# Women's Status in other Countries is much better

- **Egypt:**

- Women allowed to travel overseas without approval from their significant other
- women are now allowed to file for divorce but must give up all financial claims
- Female police officers, doctors, teachers..etc



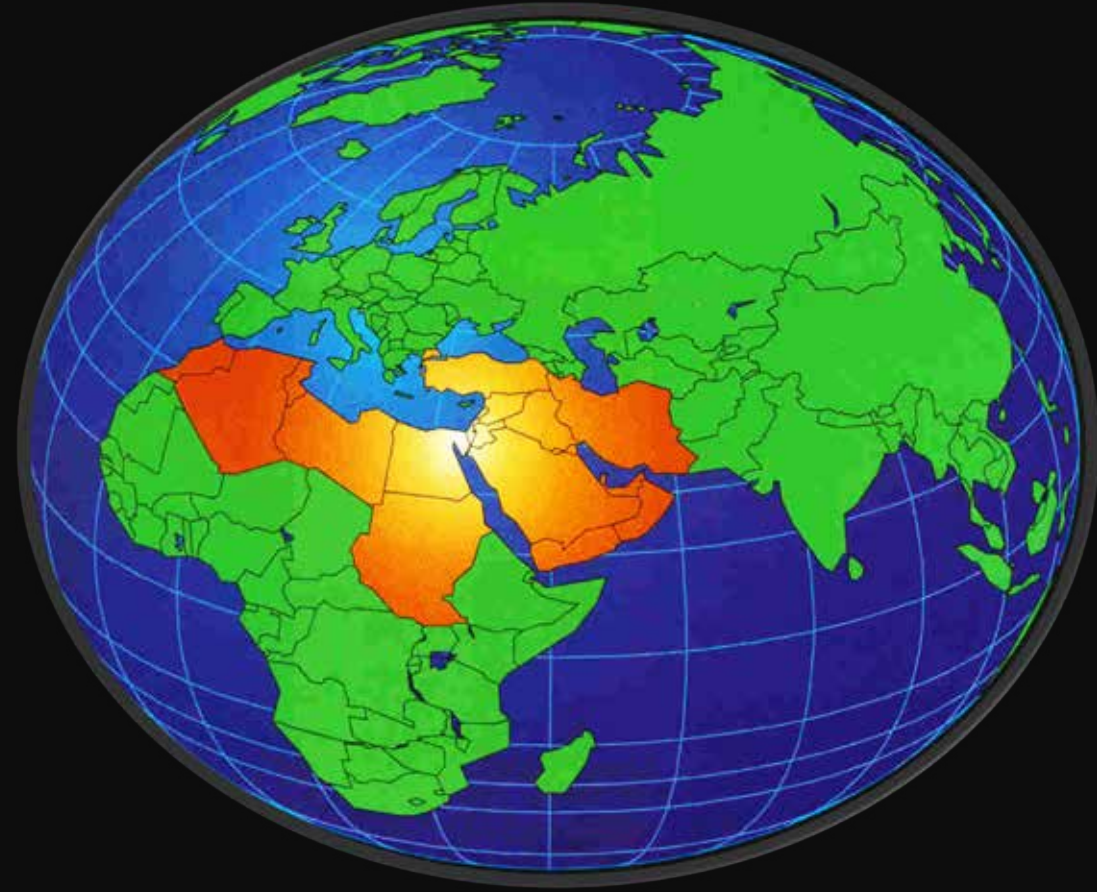


What are the Common Middle Eastern Society's Customs & Norms?



# Middle East Society; Customs & Norms

- Middle Eastern countries share many traditions and customs, but they are diverse in many ways.
- The diversity varies by country, level of education, or whether they live in a village, town, or urban area, as well as if they are religiously radical or moderate.



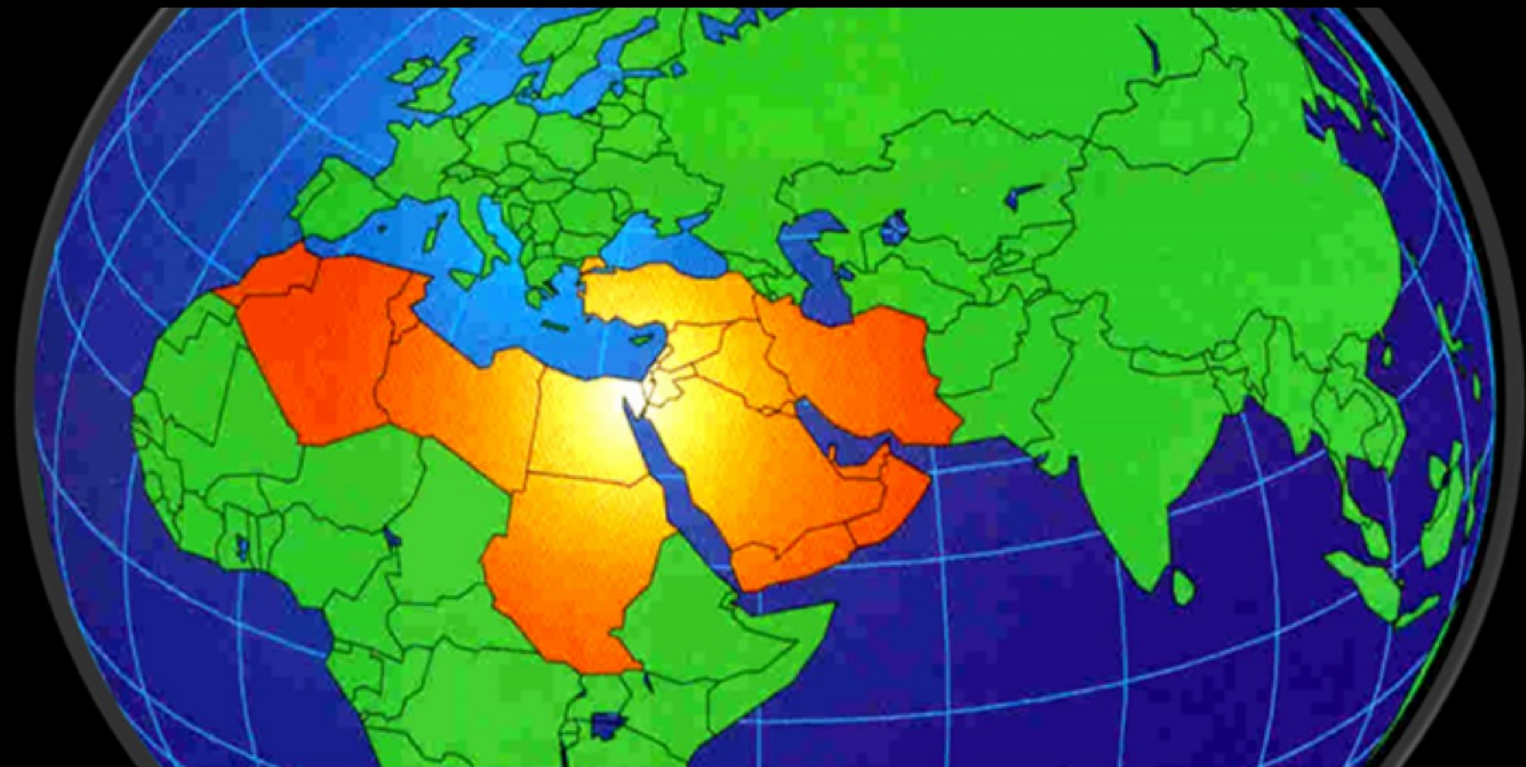


# Common Middle Eastern Characteristics

- Religiously Conservative
- Hospitable
- Smiling people – love fun
- Temperament
- Collectivism
- Returning the favor
- Problem with Secularism
- Family values



# Women in the Middle East





# Muslim Women

- The Middle East is one of the world regions where women do not enjoy as many rights and freedom as women in the West.
- In fact, **Not all women** in the Middle East live under **restricted laws**.
- Generally, those who live under Islamic Shariah law.
- Some have begun to resist restrictions and have begun to win greater freedom both in dress and activities.





# Status of Women in the Middle East



- Middle East women's status has been in transition since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Thanks to the Western media and the internet.
- M.E. women's status depends on:
  - ✓ Country
  - ✓ Religion
  - ✓ Education
  - ✓ Social status



# Women Dress code

- The dress code would represent how the person's background:
  - Traditional
  - Radical.
  - Western



# Can Middle East Women play music and dance?

- **Musical Instruments**

- Strings:**

- Oud
- Qanoon

- Percussion**

- Tabla

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKqUr8pPQfw&list=RDMKqUr8pPQfw#t=31>





# Belly Dancing



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2BPZcROWOI>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC6cJOwS018>

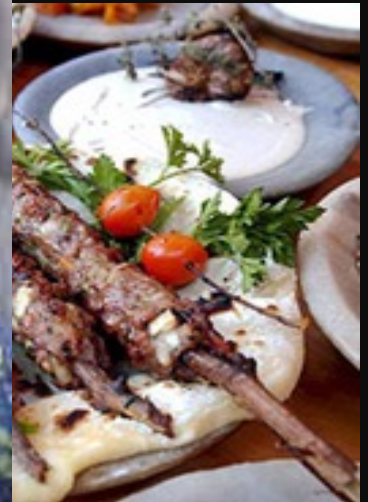
# Middle Eastern Cuisine



Mi



miqbil & Humus



shish



Falafel



# Foods in the Middle East

- Staple foods include wheat and barley, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, beef and lamb.
- Rural people grow their own food and shop at village markets.
- Urban dwellers shop at supermarkets, but bazaars, or traditional markets, are also popular gathering places in the cities.



A fruit vendor at a market in Alexandria, Egypt



# Egyptian Pita Bread is different!









Egyptian Pita Bread is different!  
The secret is the yeast and **Wheat Husk**





# The Urbanization of the Middle East

- The difference between life in the village and life in the city sometimes seems to be as great or greater than the difference between living in the Middle East and living in America.





# The Urbanization of the Middle East

- The largest cities of the region have modern high-rise buildings side by side with small houses that are hundreds of years old.
- Much of the rural population lives in stone or wooden housing, some without running water or electricity.



# The Americanization of the Middle East

- Over the past 200 years, and increasingly more now, more and more Western goods, everything from clothes to computers, have appeared in Middle Eastern markets.
- Not only goods but culture as well have been imported from the West.





Good luck!

