

Definition of Sociology

The term sociology literally means the science of society; for the term itself in its direct sense denotes that. Sociology as an academic discipline arose in the first half of 19th century (in 1837, to mention the exact year) as a special science dedicated to unravel the fundamental laws governing the societal phenomena and human social relationship with primary interest in analyzing the problems and societies of the modern, western world. It has, thus, conventionally been accepted to associate sociology with the study of the modern, industrialized societies of western world.

The first social scientist to use the term **sociology** was a Frenchman by the name of Auguste Comte who lived from 1798-1857. As coined by Comte, the term *sociology* is a combination of two words. The first part of the term is a Latin, *socius*- that may variously mean *society*, *association*, *togetherness* or *companionship*. The other word, *logos*, is of Greek origin. It literally means *to speak about* or *word*. However, the term is generally understood as *study* or *science*. Thus, the etymological, literal definition of *sociology* is that it is *the word or speaking about society*.

The scientific study of society and human behaviour is called sociology. Sociology is also defined as the scientific study of human society and social behaviour.

Although the term “sociology” was first used by the French social philosopher August Comte, the discipline was more firmly established by such theorists as Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber. Before going any further, let us note that the concepts “society and “culture” are central in sociology. While each concept shall be dealt with later in some detail, it appears to be appropriate here to help students differentiate between these two important concepts. Society generally refers to the social world with all its structures, institutions, organizations, etc around us, and specifically to a group of people who live within some type of bounded territory and who share a common way of life. This common way of life shared by a group of people is termed as culture.

Now, turning to the definitional issues, it is important that in addition to this etymological definition of the term, we need to have other substantive definitions. Thus, sociology may be generally defined as a social science that studies such kinds of phenomena as:

- The structure and function of society as a system;
- The nature, complexity and contents of human social behavior;
- The fundamentals of human social life;

- Interaction of human beings with their external environment;
- The indispensability of social interactions for human development;
- How the social world affects us etc.

A more formal definition of sociology may be that it is a social science which studies the processes and patterns of human individual and group interaction, the forms of organization of social groups, the relationship among them, and group influences on individual behavior, and *vice versa*, and the interaction between one social group and the other. Sociology is the scientific study of society, which is interested in the study of social relationship between people in group context. Sociology is interested in how we as human beings interact with each other (the pattern of social interaction); the laws and principles that govern social relationship and interactions; the /influence of the social world on the individuals, and *vice versa*. It deals with a factually observable subject matter, depends upon empirical research, and involves attempts to formulate theories and generalizations that will make sense of facts.

Origin of Sociology

In literal terms; the word “sociology” has been derived from the Latin word “Cocius” meaning ‘associate’ or ‘companion’ and the Greek word ‘Logus’ meaning “theory.” Thus, etymologically sociology can be defined as a theory or science of association or society. Sociology is systematized and scientific study of man in groups, or sociology is a social science; which makes a factual study of the social structure with its substructures, customs, and institutions, in order to understand how these factors function, their meanings, and the process by which they change.

In other words; sociology is a perspective that tries to give a sophisticated and factual explanation of why people act as they do. It is an explanation of human action and interaction that focus on our social life, and as a result, sees humans as being enormously flexible in what they are capable of doing. Its ultimate purpose remains to understand social existence of man or humans in society. Every social science has a focal point, a defined territory that it concentrates on. Sociology is interested in what happens when individuals meet, talk, cooperate, compete, quarrel, love or hate one another. Thus, its chief interest is nothing but “interacting individuals.”

Sociology as a science

Science refers to the logical, systematic methods by which knowledge is obtained and to the actual body of knowledge produced by these methods. The sciences are usually divided into two main branches: the natural-sciences; studies the physical and biological phenomena and social sciences-sciences; studies the various aspects if human behavior.

All sciences assume that there is some underlying order in the universe. They follow a pattern that is sufficiently regular for us to be able to make generalizations....statements that apply not just to a specific case but to most cases of the same type. Generalizations are crucial to science because they place isolated, seemingly meaningless events in pattern we can understand. It than becomes possible to analyze relationships of cause and effect and thus to explain why something happens and to predict that it will happen again under the same conditions again in the future.

Sociology is able to employ the same methods of investigation that all sciences do and use its finding to make reasonably reliable generalizations. Sociologists construct theories, collect analyze data, conduct experiments and make observations, keep careful records, and try to arrive at precise and accurate conclusions.

Scientific status of sociology

Sociology is relatively less advance as a discipline than most of the natural sciences. There are two reasons for that. First; the scientific method has been used to study social behavior only in recent times. Second; and more important, the study of human behavior presents many problems. Sociologists are dealing with people. People are subjects who are self-aware and capable of changing their behavior and attitude when they choose to. Unlike rocks and other non-loving things, people may be deliberately uncooperative. They may behave in unforeseen ways for private reasons of their own. They may change their behavior when they know they are being studied. Their behavior usually has extremely complex causes that may be difficult to pinpoint.

The natural science can generally offer more precise explanations and predications than sociology. But the accumulated results of sociological research are already extensive, solid and important. Sociological research methods are constantly being improved, and we can expect that they will achieve still greater precision in future.

Sociology is not less scientific than biology or chemistry or astronomy. It just faces greater problems of generalization, explanation and predication. Many scholars are suspicious of Sociology not being a science. The origin of the suspicion probably lies in the fact that few people exert in molecular biology or planetary motions, but all of us can consider ourselves experts on society, because we have had years of experience in social living.

Emergence of Sociology as and Academic Discipline

The sociology or social thought is as old as society itself, yet the origins of sociology as a discipline lie entangled in 19th century. Certain developments in Europe paved the way for the emergence of sociology as we have today. The most important of these events are as follow:

1. Enlightenment
2. French Revolution
3. Industrial Revolution
4. Colonialism
5. Developments of Social Sciences

1. Enlightenment:

The intellectual heritage of enlightenment which facilitated the way of sociology is discussed as under:

a. Society is a human not divine affair:

Before enlightenment people believed that social structure was divinely devised. Anything from inequality to social disorder was believed to be due to God's interference in human affairs. The enlightenment thinkers were the first to understand that humans could alter society, eliminate poverty, crime, injustice and inequality etc. This concept greatly influenced the development of sociology in 19th century.

b. Differentiating state and society:

Describing the thinking and action of ordinary people became significant for understanding the general conditions of society. Such an approach made distinction between State (Political Order) and Society Cleaner.

c. Scientific approach:

The enlightenment also emphasized on scientific approach for understanding society. It shifted "source of evil" from our evil nature to the evil forces of the society. In other words it helped in studying cause & effect of the evil in the society and bring for the facts, by eliminating the past myths. Through scientific approach these evil forces in society could easily be understood, isolated and altered for the well-being of society.

Thus, Enlightenment Sociology took many believes and ideas; studied them, refined them and changed them. It also began the study of Society as a phenomenon.

2. French revolution:

In 1789 the French Revolution began, and when it was finally over, Europe and the World were transformed. This also brought great changes to society and was largely responsible for the development of sociology after 1814 A.D. The French revolution also formed the basis

for two important traditions which became integral part of its study.

a. Birth of democratic society:

The French Revolution brought end to feudal society, tradition, power of church, absolute monarchy and also to other exploitative elements in society. It ensured the triumph of middle class and hence proved to be a harbinger of democracy.

b. Inspiring new sociological traditions:

After eliminating the old traditions, the French Revolution introduced two new traditions.

The first is “Conservative Tradition.” This emphasized on concepts such as order and solidarity. The other is “Liberal/Radical Tradition.” This focused on problems of inequality and conflict, power and social change. Society is described as a struggle between the powerful and powerless.

Thus, the social changes and new social thought which are associated with French Revolution provided rich material to the infant study of sociology at that time.

3. Industrial revolution:

The industrial revolution changed the European economy from agriculture based to more on manufacturing, trading and money based. It also provided greater social, cultural and political changes. These changes are as follow:

a. Change in social relationships and the power structure of society:

After the industrial revolution, the socio-economic power shifted from feudal to industrialists of urban areas who owned large factories. The change in power structure of society and the emergence of new hectic and fast living style with increased economic needs led to change in social relationships as well.

b. Massive urbanization:

The industrial revolution also brought forward massive urbanization. This left far-reaching impacts on the pattern of social life. The socio-economic need manipulated. The secondary relationships replaced the primary ones. The population in cities grew. But this also narrowed down the job opportunities, competition between haves and have-nots increased to such extent that it became a game of “Survival of fittest.” The unemployment increased along with the inflation and poverty. These disturbances paved way for social unrest and movements in political revolutions which provided a new material for the science of sociology. The changes in social structure, social relationships and the massive urbanization also paved way for rural and urban sociology.

4. Colonialism:

The European colonies in Asia, Africa and America brought Europeans into close contact with the societies very different from their own. This gave birth to curiosity in Europeans to study these societies. The thinkers and scholars of the time showed keen interest in the nature of the newly discovered societies, this in turn inspired the development of sociology.

5. Development of other social sciences:

The study of other social sciences like psychology, political science and economics greatly contributed to the birth of sociology. The development of these sciences encouraged interest in society. Within due time; the scientists, thinkers and scholars came to a notion that society and sociology needed to become a specialty area in its own right.

Fields of Sociology

Sociology is broadly defined as the study of human society. Society is vast and complex phenomenon and therefore it is generally debatable that which part of society should be studied by sociology. There is a great degree of difference of opinion regarding the definitions, scope and subject matter of sociology.

1. Criminology

This branch of sociology studies the criminal behavior of individuals or groups. Origin of crime its types nature, causes as well as law, punishment, police, etc. come under this study. The efforts for the improvement is also studied. Different organizations establish to control the crime as well as their role also come under its study.

2. Sociology of religion

This branch studies the structure of the religion in social system as no society is free from the influence of it. It analyses the social behavior of human beings. It also studies the religious constitutions and their role in the society.

3. Sociology of economy

This branch of sociology studies production, distribution, consumption and exchange of goods and services. This branch also studies the economic activities of the society in which the focus is given about the socio-cultural factors. The access in production, the mode of distribution, the real consumers, the role of culture in such activities are studied under it.

4. Rural sociology

This branch of sociology studies the way of life of rural people as the rural population is higher than the urban. The patterns of life such as behavior, belief, culture, tradition norms, values, etc. are totally different than of urban people. So, it studies the rural society in scientific way. It also studies rural life, social institutions, social structure, social processes, etc. of the rural society.

5. Urban sociology

This branch of sociology studies the way of life of urban people. It gives information about the social organizations and institution of urban society as well as social structure and social interaction. It also studies the social pathology of urban society such as discrimination) crime, corruption, robbery, beggary, loot, theft, unemployment, prostitution, environmental pollution, etc.

6. Political sociology

This branch of sociology studies different political moments of the society. It includes the study of different political ideology (view), their origin, development and functions. In this study, different political parties are considered as social institutions. Various activities and behavior of political parties are studied in this branch. As they are the part of social system.

7. Sociology of demography

Demography of scientific mathematical and statically study of population. It studies about size, situation, composition, density, distribution, and measurement etc. of the population. In this branch of sociology, we study the distribution of human population with the analysis of population change in sociological perspectives. It also finds out the determining factors of population change and its trend.

8. Sociology of law

Sociology of law and legal system are considered as the part of society, as social institution. Law is one of the very important means of social control. Law is related with other different social sub systems. Such as economy, nature of distribution, authority, structure of family kinship relationships, etc. So, this branch of sociology is related to moral order for the society as formulation and implementation of rules and regulations, law and order come under this.

9. Industrial sociology

This branch of sociology is concerned with the industrial relationship of the human beings. It studies the different industrial organizations and institutions. As well as their interrelationship and links with other various institutions of society. It also studies the inter relationships of industrial institutions with various aspects of human life such as culture, beliefs, customs, religion or the way of life.

10. Cultural sociology

The sociological study of the historical processes involved in cultural phenomena (such as art, philosophy, and religion)

Difference Between Social Work and Sociology

Although, social work and sociology are two related fields and both deal with the relationships of human beings to their social environment. However, the two career paths involve very different work environments, practices and education

1. Social Work and Sociology are two different disciplines with two different domains of work. The former is purely based on practice for social development and consists of a wide range of methodology and artisan of development whereas the later deals with scientific exploration of social world and theory development.
2. There is a sharp difference between a sociology degree and a social work field. Sociology is the 'study of societies' as they 'are' ... social work 'helps the people who can't live without help in society in general'
3. The production of the discipline of social work is social development whereas sociology merely produces knowledge and information about social life.
4. Sociology is the academic study of how people interact in groups and why. Social Work is a professional field of study concerned with the practical application of techniques to alleviate the problems of individuals in society (poverty, crime, etc...)
5. Social work and sociology are related, although there are fundamental differences between the two. Sociologists study and analyze social organizations and institutions. The emphasis of sociologists has been on theory development, primarily through positivistic approaches.
6. Sociologists are interested in understanding the “why” of human interaction. Sociology observes; it maintains a detached posture from addressing the social problems. In contrast, social workers attempt to apply theories of social organization and interaction to improve social functioning. Social workers go beyond merely understanding social problems and focus their efforts to improve social functioning through social work interventions. The goal of social work profession is engendering progressive social change, improving social conditions, creating more humane delivery systems and problem solving with individuals, families, groups and communities. Social workers develop and implement interventions in the form of programs, policies, and social services for alleviation of social problems prevailing in the society.
7. Sociology and social work are very different careers with different educational pathways. While both draw on a similar body of knowledge, sociology generally

focuses on research and study while social workers are more directly involved with applying knowledge about society to assisting individuals and families. Consequently, a sociology degree will typically involve more theoretical and methodological coursework, while social work degrees will often have a large practical component focusing on current policy and specific therapeutic and service techniques.

8. Sociology is the scientific study of social behaviour. Whereas Social Work is a much more vocational subject with the aim of providing an increased quality of life for families and individuals.
9. Social work is a profession that deals with social problems. The training for a career in social work is interdisciplinary and may include course work in sociology. Sociology, however, is a single discipline that studies social behavior or society.
10. Another way of expressing this difference, is sociology is mainly theoretical, while social work is largely practical being an applied science

Culture and Elements of Culture

What is culture? The concept of culture is sometimes easier to grasp by description than by definition. For example, suppose you meet a woman who has just arrived to your area from another province/country. That her culture is different from yours is immediately evident. You first see her clothing, jewelry, makeup and hairstyle. Next you hear her in speech, then it becomes apparent by her gesture. Later you may hear her expressing unfamiliar beliefs, about the world or what is valuable in life. All these characteristics are indicative of **culture.... the language, belief, values, norms, behaviours and even material objects that are passed from one generation to another.**

The culture may also be defined as follows;

The total range of activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions, which are transmitted and reinforced by members of the group

As this definition suggests, there are two basic components of culture: **Material culture** consists of artifacts such as jewelry, weapons, buildings, machines, eating utensils, hairstyle and clothing. **Non-Material culture** is a group's way of thinking (including its beliefs, values, and other assumptions about the world) and way of doing (its common patterns of behaviour, including language and other forms of interaction).

Culture and taken-for-granted orientation to life

Meeting someone from a different culture may make us aware of culture's pervasive influence but attaining the same level of awareness regarding our own culture is quite another matter. Our speech, our gesture, our belief and our customs are usually taken for granted. We assume that we are normal or natural and we almost follow them without question. An anthropologist Ralph Linton (1936) said "The last thing a fish would ever notice would be water". So also, with people: except in unusual circumstance, the effects of our own culture generally remain unnoticeable to us.

Yet culture's significance is profound; it touches almost every aspect of who what we are. We came into this life without a language, without values and morality, with no ideas about religion, war, money, love, use of space and so on. We possessed none of these fundamental orientations that we take for granted and that are so essential in determining the type of people we are. Yet at this point in our lives, we all have acquired them. Sociologists call it culture within us. These learned and shared ways of believing and doing penetrate our beings at an early age and quickly become part of our taken for granted assumptions concerning normal behaviour. Culture becomes the lens through which we perceive and

evaluate what is going on around us. Seldom we question these assumptions for, like water to fish, the framework from which we view life remains largely beyond our ordinary perception.

Components of Symbolic Culture

Sociologists sometimes refer to non-material culture as symbolic culture, because its central phenomenon is symbol that people use. A symbol is something to which people attach meaning and that they use to communicate. Symbols are the basis of non-material culture. They include gestures, language, values, norms sanctions, folkways and mores. Lets look at each of the component of symbolic culture.

Gestures

Gestures, which involve using one's body to communicate with others, are useful shorthand ways to give message without saying words. Although people in every culture of the world use gesture, what a gesture means may change completely from one culture to another.

Gestures, not only facilitate communicate but also because they differ around the world, can lead to misunderstanding and embarrassment or worse. Anthropologist are not agreed tha gestures are universal, they say that even nodding the head up and down to indicate 'yes' is not universal. In some parts of the world, nodding the head up and down means 'no' such as in Turkey. However, ethologists, researchers who study biological bases of behaviour, claims that expression of anger, pouting, fear and sadness are built into our biology and are universal.

Symbols

The first element that exists in every culture is a variety of symbols. A **symbol** is anything that is used to stand for something else. People who share a culture often attach a specific meaning to an object, gesture, sound, or image. For example, a cross is a significant symbol to Christians. It is not simply two pieces of wood attached to each other, nor is it just an old object of torture and execution. To Christians, it represents the basis of their entire religion, and they have great reverence for the symbol.

We can see more examples of symbols in American culture. Emoticons are combinations of keyboard characters that many use to represent their feelings online or through texting. The American flag represents our entire country. A red light at a traffic intersection is used to relay the message that you need to stop your vehicle.

Language

The primary way in which people communicate with each other is through **language** **which** is a system of words and symbols used to communicate with other people. Each word is actually a symbol, a sound to which we have attached a particular meaning so that then we

can use it to communicate with others. Language itself is universal in the sense that all human groups have language, but there is nothing universal about the meaning given to a particular sound. Thus, like gesture, in different cultures, the same sound may mean something entirely different...or may have no meaning at all.

This includes full languages as we usually think of them, such as English, Spanish, French, etc. But, it also includes slang, and common phrases that are unique to certain groups of people. For example, even though English is spoken fluently in both America and Britain, we have slang and phrases that mean different things. American French fries are British chips, American cookies are British biscuits, and so on.

Another example of how cultural languages differ beyond vocabulary is the fact that eye contact represents different meanings in different cultures. In America, eye contact suggests that you are paying attention and are interested in what a person has to say. In other cultures, eye contact may be considered rude and to be a challenge of authority.

Values, Norms and Sanctions

To learn a culture is to learn people's value, their ideas of what is desirable in life. When we uncover people's values, we learn a great deal about them. **Values** are the standards by which people define good and bad, beautiful and ugly. Values underlie our preferences, guide our choices and indicate what we hold worthwhile in life. Every group develops expectations concerning the right way to reflect its values. Sociologists use the term **norm** to describe those expectations or rules of behaviour, that develop out of group's value. The term sanction refers to the reactions people get for following or breaking norms. A **positive sanction** is an expression of approval given for following a norm, while **negative sanction** reflects disapproval for breaking norm. Positive sanctions can be material such as monetary reward, a prize or trophy, but in everyday life usually consists of smiles, pat on the back, soothing words or gestures. Negative sanctions can also be material...being fined in courts in one example, but negative sanctions, too, are more likely to consists of harsh words or gestures such as frowns, stares or raised fists.

Folkways and mores

Norms that are not strictly enforced are called **folkways**, We expect people to comply with folkways, but are likely to shrug our shoulders and not make a big deal about it if they don't. Other norms, however, are taken much more seriously. We think of them as essential to our core values, and we insist on conformity. They are called **Mores**. A person steals, rapes or kills have violated society's most important Mores.

A man who walks down a street wearing nothing on upper half of his body is violating folkway, a man who walks down a street wearing nothing on the lower half of his body is violating mores, the requirement that people cover their private parts in the public.

It should also be noted that one group's folkways may be another group's mores. Although a man walking down a street with upper half of his body uncovered is deviating from a folkway, a woman doing the same is violating a more. A **taboo** refers to a norm so strongly ingrained (in-built) that even the thought of its violation is greeted with revulsion (disgust). Eating human flesh and having sex with one's parents are examples of taboo.

Characteristics of Pakistani Culture

Every great nation enjoys its own culture. Similarly, Pakistani culture is very distinct due to its Islamic nature and rich historical background. Pakistani culture has the following characteristics:

- i.** Islamic values and traditions
- ii.** National and regional languages
- iii.** Mixed culture
- iv.** Rich literature
- v.** Male dominated society
- vi.** Variety of dresses
- vii.** Fairs and festivals
- viii.** Sports
- ix.** Handicrafts

Islamic values:

Pakistani culture is actually a part of the contemporary Islamic civilization which draws its value and traditions from Islam and rich Islamic history. Majority of population comprises of Muslims and follows teachings of Islam, i-e., belief in one Allah, Prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad P.B.U.H, brotherhood, equality and social justice etc. Islam is religion of peace and patience. Pakistani society is very cooperative. National calendar is marked by religious days which are observed with great devotion.

National and regional languages:

Pakistan is a large country which comprises of four provinces, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA). All of these component parts have their own regional languages. As such Punjabi, Pashtu, Sindhi, Balochi, Barohi and Kashmiri are regional languages. However, Urdu is the national language which is spoken and understood in all parts of the country.

Mixed culture:

Practically speaking Pakistani culture is a beautiful blend of the Punjabi, Sindhi, Pathan, Baluchi, Barohi, Seraiki and Kashmiri cultures. In addition, the presence of Hindu community in Sindh gives touches of dance and music in the Sindhi region. The Hindus sing Bhejas but Pakistani culture has adopted Qawwali which is a praise of the Holy Prophet PBUH.

Rich literature:

Pakistani culture is rich in the literatures of Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtu, Baruhi, Baluchi and Kashmiri languages. Urdu literature boasts of the masterpieces of Maulana Azad, Iqbal, Shibli, Hali, Ghalib, Agha Hashar, Manto and Faiz whereas the Punjabi literature stands out with great names like Waris Shah, Sultan Bahu, Ghulam Farid, Bulhay Shah and Shah Hussain etc. Similarly, Sindhi literature glitters with the masterpieces of Shah Abdul Latif, Sachal Sarmast, Shah Qadir Bakhsh, and Faqir Nabi Bakhsh. The Pushto literature also boasts of names like Sheikh Saleh, Raghoon Khan, Akhund dardeeza, Khushal Khan Khattak and Rahman Baba. The Baluchi literature comprises of masterpieces of Jam Durk, Muhammad Ali, Zahoor Shah Hashmi, Ghani Parvez, Hasrat Baluch, Abbas Ali Zemi and Aziz Bugti etc.

Male dominated society:

Pakistani society is dominated by male members. Each family is headed by the senior most male member who is responsible for arranging the bread and butter of the family.

Variety of dresses:

Pakistani culture is rich in variety of dresses: The people of Punjab, the Pathans of NWFP, the Baluchi people and the Sindhis wear their own distinct dresses. These dresses are very colorful and prominent and give attractive look during national fairs and festivals.

Fairs and festivals:

The culture of Pakistan has great tradition of Fairs and festivals. These fairs are held in all parts of the country. Moreover, annual urs of great saints are held to honor their anniversaries. On these occasions, fairs are also held in which people take part in great numbers. Out of these the Horse and Cattle shows of Lahore, Mianwali and Sibi are famous whereas the Polo festival of Gilgit is prominent at national and international level. Moreover, annual urs of Hazrat Daata Ganj Bakhsh, Madhu Lal Hussain, Baba Bulhay Shah, Baba Farid Gunj Shakar, Baba Gulu Shah, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah, Abdul Latif Bhittai, Hazrat Noshah Ganj Bakhsh, Bari Imam, Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, and Bahauddin Zakriya are celebrated with great fervour.

Sports:

Pakistani people are great lovers of sports and games. Modern games like hockey, cricket, football, badminton, squash, table tennis and lawn tennis are played throughout the country. In addition, wrestling, boxing, and athletics are also very popular among masses. Pakistan has produced great sportsmen in the past. These include Bholu in Wrestling, Hanif, Miandad,

Imran, Wasim Akram, and Inzamam in cricket, Shehnaz sheikh, Islahuddin, KHalid mahmood, Akhtar Rasool, and Munir Dar in hockey and Jahangir, Jansher in squash.

Handicrafts:

Pakistan enjoys great distinction in handicrafts at international level. Wooden furniture of Chiniot, sports goods of Sialkot and embroidery of Multan, Bahawalpur and Hyderabad is world famous.

Pakistan's culture is very diverse. This stems from the fact that what is now Pakistan has in the past been invaded and occupied by many different peoples, including White Huns, Persians, Arabs, Turks, Mongols and various Eurasian groups. There are differences in culture among the different ethnic groups in matters such as dress, food, and religion, especially where indigenous pre-Islamic customs differ from Islamic practices