
ISLAM AND THE ROLE IT PLAYS IN BUSINESS (Cont'd):

Muslims see their religion as an integral part of their daily life. They make no distinction between the sacred and the secular, morality, laws and politics. For example the Quran lays down clear economic guidelines.

The Quran denounces all unearned income, usury and gambling. It establishes the Islamic principles of Sharia law. Sharia law derives from four sources; the Quran, the Sunnah (The Prophet's deeds and utterances), Ijma (consensus of scholars), and Qiyas (reasoning by analogy). As in Western systems, an accused is assumed innocent until proven guilty and the burden of proof rests with the accuser. Often two or four eye witnesses are required to establish guilt. A system of appeals exists as in the West. Civil cases are often settled by a reconciliation method in which the parties accept a proportion of the guilt.

In general, the countries of the region are strict Muslim states and the heritage of Islam is deeply rooted in the character of the people. Islamic customs govern the general way of life in both social and business practices; care must be taken to respect this, particularly in the area of dress, deportment, language and behaviour.

THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY:

Second only to the importance of religion is the importance of the family. Once again the Quran lays out clearly the importance of the family and the obligations of the parents.

The role of the husband/father as provider and protector is confirmed. The role of the wife/mother as homemaker, protector of the children and child rearer is made clear. As a result, typically women do not work outside the home and in many cases do not leave the home unless in the company of their husbands or some other male member of the family. Marriages within the larger family group of cousins and other families of the tribe have traditionally been encouraged. Most of the time this leads to family arranged marriages. These factors and the permissibility of having up to four wives and their traditional role have led to large extended families.

With Arab colleagues it is usually customary to enquire about their family rather than asking how his "wife" is doing. It is permissible to single out family members if an intimacy has been established with your Arab counterpart, agent or partner and you have had the opportunity to meet for example, his wife and other members of his family.