



People of Syria/Egypt

Most of the people in the Middle East are Arabs; the largest number of non-Arabs live in Iran and Turkey. The two people in the image show the cultural variety of the Middle East. The woman and children in Syria are probably Arabs, who make up 90% of Syria's population. The terrain and her appearance suggest that she lives in the countryside. As is typical of most women in the Arab Middle East, her arms, legs, and head are covered. However, some hair shows, her lower face is uncovered, and she is smiling. Syria is a secular Arab state that does not enforce the strict rules of dress common in Arabian Gulf countries. In Damascus, many women wear Western dress and go out in public with their heads uncovered. The man in the marketplace in Aswan, Egypt, may or may not be an Arab. Aswan is in southern Egypt where many Nubians live, some of whom have intermarried with Arabs. That may account for the dark skin, but Caucasian features, of the merchant. The man is a vendor in a souk -- the Arab term for a marketplace where vendors have small shops in an outdoor setting, in alleys between buildings, or indoors. The merchant is selling food and maybe the brass hookahs (water pipes) behind him. He is wearing traditional garb, a light-colored, long-sleeved robe that reaches his ankles. His head is covered, though Muslim tradition does not require it.

ART: Question 1

What does the manner in which the infant is wrapped suggest about Syria's climate?

Question 2

Why is this woman dressed differently from the way women are required to dress in Saudi Arabia?

What is different about her appearance compared with many women in Damascus, Syria?

Question 3

Egypt is a secular Arab country. Could this man wear Western clothing? Why might he choose to wear traditional robes?