

Pre-Islamic Arab Societies: Uncovering Cultural Heritage, Social Systems, and Belief Systems

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Abstract: Pre-Islamic Arab society is a social group that inhabited the Arab region before the advent of Islam. Their rich culture, social structures, and belief systems have contributed significantly to the Middle East's historical advancement and civilization. This article seeks to provide a fuller understanding of pre-Islamic Arab society by emphasizing some aspects of the predominant cultural, social, and religious systems at the time. This study uses literary analysis to consult historical sources like ancient writings, trip diaries, and archaeological artifacts. A historical study has also been done to compile precise and comprehensive data. The research findings show that pre-Islamic Arab society had a diverse and rich culture. They developed the highly respected Arabic language, poetry, and literary traditions. Their social structure comprises tribes, and each tribe has its strict hierarchy and moral laws. However, the variety of their religious traditions includes monotheistic, animism, polytheism, and paganism. This article argues that pre-Islamic Arab societies had a complex and rich cultural heritage. Their belief system incorporates numerous forms of mysticism, and their social order is founded on a solid tribal structure. Grasp pre-Islamic Arab society in depth can help one understand the Middle East region's history and culture.

Keywords: Arab society, pre-Islamic Arab, cultural heritage, social system, belief system

1. Introduction

Arab society has a lengthy and varied history before the introduction of Islam in the seventh century CE. Sumeria, Babylon, and Assyria were just a few of the ancient



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civilizations that began in the Arab world(Foolady & Moftekhari, 2014). Despite its lengthy history, pre-Islamic Arab society's evolution is frequently disregarded in historical analyses. Arab society was divided into several tribal groups, leading to semi-nomadic existence in the desert and the interior of Arabia during the pre-Islamic era(Sarayrah, 2004). The pre-Islamic Arabs were renowned as traders, fierce warriors, and herders(Eaton, 2013). They had a social structure centered on the values of honor and bravery and strong family ties.

A complex social structure with various classes and hierarchies characterizes pre-Islamic Arab society(Meraj, 2015; PeterWebb, 2020). During that time, some types were the aristocracy, nobility, tribal chiefs, free commoners, and enslaved people(PeterWebb, 2020). The aristocracy, nobles, and tribal chiefs, sometimes known as the "Arab Jahilyah" or "people of the Age of Ignorance," occupied the highest social positions(Zhusupova et al., 2020). Making social and political decisions required the nobility's enormous political and economic influence. The traders, an essential part of long-distance trade, were below the elite group. They conducted business with the Mediterranean Sea region and acted as a bridge between East and West. Arab society was made more prosperous, and their economic advancement was affected by the success of this commerce. There were commoners at a lower level, including farmers, herders, and others. They labored to provide for their daily requirements. They frequently lived in small communities known as "qabilah,"(Gorlée, 2013) which depended on the environment, particularly water, to sustain their lives in the harsh desert.

Before the advent of Islam, Arab society had a strong oral tradition that was used to preserve and transmit literature, history, and folklore(Walidin, 2014). Poetry played a significant role in pre-Islamic Arab culture as a celebration, amusement, and communication form(Meraj, 2015). Many poems were remembered and sung during festivals and social events, becoming emblems of the Arab literary tradition(Agai, 2021; Fakhreddine, 2021; Nawawi, 2017). The polytheistic religious tradition of pre-Islamic Arab society included worshipping numerous gods and spirits. For the pre-Islamic Arab community, the Kaaba in Mecca was a significant place of worship where pilgrims from various tribes would congregate to honor their gods(Meraj, 2015). However, the introduction of Islam in the seventh century CE drastically altered Arab civilization. The pre-Islamic social and cultural structures were replaced by the appearance of Prophet Muhammad and the dissemination of Islamic teachings, which consolidated Arab culture under one faith.

This article tries to honor the cultural heritage and social structures that existed before that vital transition by highlighting the history of Arab society before the advent of

Islam. We may appreciate Arab society's long history and the significant influence they had on world history and civilization by comprehending their origins.

2. Literatur Review

2.1. Arab Society

The term "Arab society" refers to the various racial and ethnic communities that make up the Arab world, which includes much of the Middle East and some of North Africa (Bhuiyan & Farazmand, 2020; Härdig, 2015). The Arab world is a region that spans 22 countries, including Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. While Arabic primarily defines the Arab world, it is also characterized by a shared cultural heritage, including religion, customs, traditions, and history. Arab culture comprises numerous ethnic groups, a long history, and distinctive cultural traditions. Arabic, the official or primary language in most Arab nations, is a critical aspect of Arab society (Variations of Arabic Language in Indonesia, 2019). In the Arab world, there are numerous dialectal variations of the Arabic language (Alnosairee & Sartini, 2021). Many Arabs, particularly in urban regions and those interested in international commerce, speak English or other languages fluently in addition to Arabic (Al-Rojaie, 2021).

Muslim scholars view Arab society through an Islamic lens because Islam is a fundamental aspect of Arab identity. Islam has played an essential role in shaping the social, legal, and cultural institutions of Arab society, and Muslim scholars recognize this influence. Islam is a religion and a way of life that covers all aspects of human life (Moaddel, 2002). As such, it has significantly impacted Arab society, shaping its values, beliefs, and practices. For example, Islamic justice has influenced legal systems in Arab countries, with Islamic law (Sharia) being the basis for many legal codes (Johnson & Sergie, 2014). Likewise, Islamic principles have influenced social norms and cultural practices in Arab society (Ayish, 2003). For example, the emphasis on family and community is a core Islamic value reflected in Arab culture, where family ties are highly valued, and social relations are often based on kinship. Thus, Muslim scholarship recognizes the powerful influence of Islam in shaping Arab society and seeks to understand this influence to understand better the history, culture, and values of the Arab world (Al-Kandari & Gaither, 2011). By studying the intersections between Islam and Arab society, Muslim scholars can gain insight into the complex relationships between religion, culture, and identity in the Arab world.

Western studies often take a more multidisciplinary and secular perspective in viewing Arab societies. The study of Arab culture is carried out in a broader social, political, and economic context (Mohamed et al., 2020, pp. 141–149). The past and present of Arab countries, social issues such as gender and human rights, economics and development, and international relations are the main focus. Western studies also tend to highlight the process of colonization, its impact on Arab societies, and the geopolitical interactions between the Arab world and the West (Mazrui, 1975, pp. 725–742). Data from the Pew Research Center show that Arab countries experienced significant impacts from 19th and 20th-century Western colonialism, such as forming modern state borders and identity politics (Jehlen & Said, 1994). Western academics also analyze the complex relationship between the Arab world and the West in the context of contemporary issues, such as the Middle East and Islam-West conflicts.

2.2. Pre-Islamic Arabia

In pre-Islamic Arab society, community life was centered on traditional values such as loyalty to the tribe, nomadic culture, and polytheistic beliefs (Arabia, n.d.). Archaeological evidence shows that ancient Arab societies lived in the Arabian Peninsula for thousands of years before Christ, with trade centers and civilizations developing along trade routes. However, pre-Islamic Arab society was also known for internal conflicts, inter-tribal warfare, and social practices that were later challenged by Islamic teachings, such as polygamy, slavery, and unfair treatment of women (Hidayat et al., 2021). When the Prophet Muhammad received the first revelation in 610 AD, the new teachings he brought, such as monotheism, the principles of justice, and respect for human dignity, gradually changed the social order of Arab society so that Islam then spread widely in the region and beyond (-, 2023).

Pre-Islamic Arab society was generally composed of tribal communities living in the Arabian Peninsula (Mohd. Shamsuddin & Hj. Ahmad, 2020, pp. 270–282). Their social structure was based on a clan and kinship system. Each tribe had a leader responsible for tribal affairs and resolving inter-tribal disputes. At that time, most pre-Islamic Arabs were polytheistic, worshiping various gods and spirits. Archaeological evidence shows that Mecca, as a trading center and holy place, was a place of worship for many gods (المخزومي, 2017). The Kaaba, the building believed to be God's house, is considered a holy place and center of devotion (Hjärpe, 1979, pp. 30–40). Excavations in Mecca and its surroundings have uncovered various idols and symbols of the worship of ancient gods that were part of the religious practices of pre-Islamic Arab society. These facts reflect that pre-Islamic Arab society was centered on a polytheistic belief system and a social structure based on clans and tribes.

Pre-Islamic Arab societies also had solid oral traditions, including highly regarded poetry and oral literature(Conrad & Pinckney Stetkevych, 2017; Loya, 1974a). Poets and scholars played an essential role in pre-Islamic Arab culture and were revered as intellectual leaders. Although pre-Islamic Arab societies generally adhered to polytheistic religions, some followed other faiths, such as Judaism and Christianity(Hughes, 2020). However, most Arab cultures at that time still followed traditional Arabic beliefs(Ajami, 2016). Historical records show that oral literature, especially poetry, was highly valued and essential to pre-Islamic Arabic cultural identity(Loya, 1974b, pp. 202–215). Poets are considered opinion leaders and play a crucial role in society. Meanwhile, data from archaeological studies reveal that Jewish and Christian communities also lived in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula. However, they are still a minority compared to adherents of traditional religions.

2.3. Cultural and Religious Heritage

Cultural heritage is a collection of knowledge, beliefs, values, traditions, practices, languages, arts, and other forms of heritage that are passed down from generation to generation in a society(Lenzerini, 2011, pp. 101–120). Cultural heritage encompasses all aspects of human life, including social, economic, political, and spiritual systems. Cultural heritage is the result of human interaction with their environment and reflects the identity and history of a community. According to UNESCO, cultural heritage includes human ways of life, thought, and achievements in various fields such as art, architecture, music, dance, literature, culinary, clothing, customs, and religious celebrations(Blake, 2000, pp. 61–85). The study from the World Cultural Organization emphasizes that cultural heritage is not only in the form of physical objects but also includes oral traditions, social customs, rituals, and practices considered necessary by a society(Kurin, 2004, pp. 66–77). Research from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) shows that cultural heritage is essential in building identity, nurturing cultural diversity, and encouraging sustainable development(Purchla, 2022, pp. 566–572). A well-preserved cultural heritage can be an economic resource through cultural tourism and a means to promote dialogue between nations and maintain social cohesion.

Religion is also an important part of cultural heritage. Religion is essential in shaping cultural identities, values, and social norms. Religion provides moral guidance, belief systems, religious rituals, and worship practices that shape the way of life and understanding of the world for its followers. Research from the Pew Research Center shows that religion influences various aspects of culture, such as art, architecture, music, dance, and literature(Cvitković, 2013). The art and architecture of churches, temples, mosques, or other places of worship reflect the beauty and uniqueness of certain

religions(Kulik et al., 2022). Religious music and dance are also integral to spiritual practices in various traditions, as documented in ethnomusicologists' studies. In addition, data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reveals that religious-based cultural heritage, such as spiritual practices, religious festivals, and sacred artifacts, play an essential role in maintaining global cultural diversity(Nikolova et al., 2019). Efforts to preserve this religious-based cultural heritage are essential to understanding the history, identity, and religious life of people worldwide.

Cultural and religious heritage are intertwined and influence each other(Niglio, 2017, pp. 152–156). Religion influences cultural practices and provides a framework of values and beliefs for society, while cultural heritage influences the form and expression of faith in daily life. According to a UNESCO report, understanding and preserving cultural and religious heritage is essential to maintaining a community's cultural identity, history, and traditions and maintaining cultural diversity in an increasingly globalized world(Achille & Fiorillo, 2022). The study from the World Cultural Organization emphasizes that religious-based cultural heritage, such as places of worship, spiritual practices, and religious festivals, is an integral part of people's identities and lives. Data from the Pew Research Center also shows that religion is often the primary motivation in efforts to preserve cultural heritage in various parts of the world(Berliner, 2013, pp. 400–402). People tend to maintain cultural traditions and practices closely related to their beliefs. Therefore, understanding and preserving cultural and religious heritage simultaneously is essential to maintain cultural diversity and continuity in the era of globalization.

3. Methods

This study uses a qualitative methodology to develop a comprehensive picture of Arab society before the advent of Islam. This method enables a more thorough examination of cultural elements, social structures, and religious activities. Primary materials of pre-Islamic Arab life, such as old manuscripts, are used in the research. These first-hand accounts will provide us with precise information on how they lived throughout the time under study. In addition to primary sources, the research draws information on pre-Islamic Arab life from secondary sources such as books, journals, and pertinent scholarly papers.

A thorough analysis of earlier studies on pre-Islamic Arab life is done to collect data. The researcher is working on a comprehensive literature study to comprehend earlier studies on this topic. Before beginning the study, having a solid knowledge base is beneficial. The primary themes that emerge from the data collection are identified and

categorized using thematic analysis to understand the data. It will facilitate a thorough grasp of several facets of pre-Islamic Arab life. The researcher discusses the overall research findings after interpreting their data analysis findings. It aids in creating a complete understanding of pre-Islamic Arab society's cultural legacy, social structures, and religious practices. This research can provide fuller insight into pre-Islamic Arab culture, including its artistic characteristics, social institutions, and spiritual practices, by using qualitative research methodologies and merging secondary and primary data sources.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula: Geographical Conditions in the Context of International Relations

During the pre-Islamic period, the Arabian Peninsula had a strategic and significant geographical location in the international context (Abdul et al. et al., 2023; Al Garoo, 2018, pp. 57–69). The Arabian Peninsula is situated in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, spanning between the continents of Africa and Asia, making it a bridge between the two. This position made the Arabian Peninsula a hub for trade and an important route connecting various regions in the ancient world. The geographical location of the Arabian Peninsula, related to major trade routes between India, Mesopotamia (the part that is now Iraq), and the Mediterranean Sea, provided access to various resources and natural wealth needed for trade. As a result, it became a desirable location for multiple civilizations and regional powers during the pre-Islamic period.

During the pre-Islamic period, kingdoms such as the Nabatean Kingdom (in present-day Jordan and parts of Saudi Arabia), the Himyarite Kingdom (in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula), and the Lakhmid Kingdom (in present-day Iraq and parts of Saudi Arabia) held strong positions and wealth by controlling the trade routes that passed through the Arabian Peninsula (القاجي, 2016 & الحسيني, pp. 101–122). Additionally, the Arabian Peninsula had significant cultural influence in the international context during the pre-Islamic period. Mecca and Medina, the two holiest cities in Islam, were located in the Arabian Peninsula. Even before the advent of Islam, Mecca was already an essential center for worship and trade in the region, where people from various tribes and nations came for pilgrimage to the Kaaba. It resulted in the exchange of culture, ideas, and religions in the Arabian Peninsula, which had long-lasting impacts on the development of world history.

The geographic location of the Arabian Peninsula during the pre-Islamic period was a significant factor in its development and influence(Grasso, 2023a). Situated at the crossroads of major trade routes connecting the Mediterranean world, Africa, and Asia, the Arabian Peninsula had access to vital commercial hubs and resources. This strategic positioning allowed the region to emerge as a trade, politics, and cultural exchange center. The peninsula's diverse landscapes, from vast deserts to fertile oases, supported various economic activities, from agriculture to pastoral nomadism. The thriving trade networks traversed the region and facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and people, contributing to the Arabian Peninsula's cultural richness and political significance in the pre-Islamic era. This advantageous geographical setting was a crucial driver in the region's prominence and influence during that pivotal historical period.

4.2. Social Stratification of Pre-Islamic Arab Society: From the Aristocratic Class to the Slave Class

In pre-Islamic Arabia, society was stratified based on various factors, including birth, tribe, wealth, and social status. Some common social strata in pre-Islamic Arab communities(Abdul et al., 2023, pp. 172–182): *First*, Nobility and Rulers. This was the uppermost class in pre-Islamic Arab society. They were esteemed families with political power, wealth, and significant influence(Muqtada, 2018). Rulers such as kings, tribal chiefs, or clan leaders had the authority to make political decisions and defend their territories. Some notable noble and ruling groups during that time were Banu Hashim, the ancestral tribe of Prophet Muhammad; Banu Umayyah, a powerful Qurayshi tribe that ruled in Mecca; Banu Makhzum, one of the prominent Qurayshi tribes in Mecca; Banu Tamim, an influential Arab tribe; and Banu Kindah, a strong tribe in the central region of the Arabian Peninsula(Ali, 2020; Sarfraz et al., 2021). Other groups, such as Banu Thaqif, Banu 'Adi, and Banu Quraidhah, also held political influence and power in various regions of pre-Islamic Arabia.

Second, Merchants and Landowners. This class comprised wealthy merchants and landowners with significant wealth(Brett-Crowther, 1979, pp. 715–716). They were involved in cross-regional trade and often had trade connections with other regions around the Arabian Peninsula. Merchants and landowners held substantial economic influence in pre-Islamic Arab society(Batou, 2022, pp. 164–208). Some prominent groups within this class were Banu Quraysh, who dominated trade activities in Mecca and controlled many aspects of trade in the region; Banu Makhzum, who, in addition to being a noble group, had members involved in business and were known for their success as traders; Banu Umayyah, who, apart from being a noble group, played a significant role in trade and had extensive trading networks; Banu Tamim, who, despite being known for

their military skills, also engaged in business, including camel trade, commodity exchange, and trade in goods; and Banu Kindah, who, apart from their reputation in poetry and literature, also had a role in business and had a significant economic presence in the central region of the Arabian Peninsula. Other merchant and landowner groups such as Banu Thaqif, Banu Hanifah, and Banu Nadir also played a role in trade and economic activities in pre-Islamic Arabia.

Third, Working Class: During pre-Islamic times, various workers played essential roles in Arab society. Some of these groups were: 1) Farmers: Farmers were responsible for cultivating, tending to crops, and harvesting agricultural produce. Agriculture was the primary economic activity in pre-Islamic Arabia, and farmers played a vital role in meeting the society's food needs; 2) Fishermen: Given the long coastline of the Arabian Peninsula, fishermen played a crucial role in supplying fish and other marine products. They operated in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea, engaging in fishing and trading of aquatic resources; 3) Stonemasons: Stonemasons were skilled workers constructing buildings and structures using stones. They participated in making houses, temples, fortresses, and other infrastructures in pre-Islamic Arabia; 4) Woodworkers: Woodworkers were responsible for crafting and repairing wooden items such as furniture, boats, and agricultural tools. They were also involved in constructing wooden buildings; 5) Artisans: There were various artisans, including weavers, textile workers, tailors, jewelers, and blacksmiths. They possessed specialized skills in producing handicrafts such as textiles, jewelry, weapons, and tools; 6) Field Laborers and Shepherds: Field laborers were responsible for tending and herding livestock such as sheep, goats, and camels. They searched for suitable grazing lands for their animals; 7) Servants provided domestic services to wealthy families. They performed household tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare; 8) Tanners: Tanners were skilled workers who processed animal hides to produce leather for clothing, footwear, and other leather goods. They played a significant role in maintaining and developing the economy of pre-Islamic Arab society by providing necessary goods and services for daily life and supporting trade and production in the region.

Fourth, enslaved people: In pre-Islamic times, enslaved people were part of the social stratification in Arab society (Grasso, 2023b, pp. 65–89). They were individuals who were enslaved and owned by others. Some groups of enslaved people existed during that time: 1) War Captives: War captives were individuals captured in armed conflicts or wars. Once captured, they became enslaved and were traded. Intertribal warfare among Arab tribes often resulted in war captives becoming slaves; 2) Trade enslaved people: Enslaved people were also obtained through the slave trade. Traders bought and sold enslaved

people as commodities. These slaves were often acquired from areas outside the Arabian Peninsula, such as Africa or Persia; 3) Gifts or Tribute Slaves: Slaves were also given as gifts or tributes in political relationships between tribes or nobility. Giving enslaved people could symbolize power and wealth and be part of diplomatic practices during that time; 4) Debt-enslaved people: In some cases, individuals who couldn't repay their debts could become enslaved due to their failure to make payments. Debt-enslaved people were often used as domestic servants or household workers; 5) Hereditary enslaved people: Enslaved people could also be born into slavery if their mothers were enslaved. They were born into slave status and became the property of their mother's owner. Enslaved people in pre-Islamic times had a low social level, and their lives depended entirely on their owners. They lacked the same rights as free individuals and could be treated arbitrarily. Enslaved people could be used as household workers, laborers, soldiers, or even for sexual purposes according to their owners' will.

It's important to note that social stratification in pre-Islamic Arab society was not solely based on economic factors but also on tribal affiliation and descent. Kinship and tribal membership are crucial in determining an individual's social status. Families belonging to esteemed or renowned tribes had higher social positions compared to those from less respected tribes. During the pre-Islamic era, this social stratification played a significant role in power distribution, resource access, and determining rights and responsibilities within Arab society. However, with the advent of Islam, the concepts of equality and social justice became necessary, and many aspects of this social stratification changed as Arab society developed under the influence of the new religion.

4.3. Pre-Islamic Arab Society: Cultural, Social, and Belief Systems Dimensions

Pre-Islamic Arab society had a rich and diverse cultural heritage that formed the foundation of their civilization. Before the advent of Islam, the Arab community had various artistic traditions, including arts, literature, architecture, and different social and belief systems (Abdul et al. et al., 2023b, pp. 172–182). In addition to cultural heritage, the social system was an essential element in pre-Islamic Arab society. Furthermore, belief systems played a significant role in the lives of the pre-Islamic Arab community before the arrival of Islam.

4.3.1. Cultural Heritage of Pre-Islamic Arab Society

During the pre-Islamic era, the Arab region and its surroundings had a rich and diverse cultural heritage (MACDONALD, 2000, pp. 28–79). Some aspects of this cultural heritage persisted and influenced the development of the following Arab-Islamic culture.

Among the influential cultural legacies of pre-Islamic Arab society was the Arabic language, one of that time's most important cultural heritages. This language has a long and rich history and has become a respected literary language in the Arab region. Arabic continues to be studied and used in Islamic and Arab literature. Alongside the Arabic language, another important cultural heritage was Arabic poetry. Oral literature and poetry played a central role in pre-Islamic Arab life. Arabic poetry during that time often praised heroism, love, and the beauty of nature. The tradition of Arab poets and poetry flourished, and poetry became a respected form of cultural expression.

Pre-Islamic Arab society also embraced a tribal culture (Muhammad & Salim Ahmed, 2022, pp. 175–189). The tribal system was the dominant social structure during the pre-Islamic era. Arab society was divided into organized tribes with complex rules, laws, and kinship systems. This system influenced the political, economic, and social structure of Arab society at that time. Art and craftsmanship were also part of the cultural heritage of the pre-Islamic Arab community. Sculpture, carving, painting, and engraving were used to decorate buildings, tombs, and jewelry. Crafts such as jewelry making, metalwork, and weaving were also integral to pre-Islamic culture.

Before the arrival of Islam, Arab society held beliefs in various gods and mythological creatures (Mafraji, 2023, pp. 75–91). Worship of idols and animistic beliefs were still common during the pre-Islamic era. These beliefs were reflected in Arab mythology, which depicted stories of gods and heroes. During the pre-Islamic era, trade played a significant role in Arab life. Arab traders had extensive trading networks connecting them to regions around the Mediterranean Sea, Central Asia, and North Africa. This trade influenced the exchange of culture, ideas, and goods between the Arab people and other nations. This pre-Islamic cultural heritage, along with the teachings of Islam, shaped the unique Arab cultural identity and laid the foundation for the renowned Arab-Islamic civilization that emerged later on. Although Islam replaced many pre-Islamic practices and beliefs, some elements of pre-Islamic culture still exist and play a significant role in contemporary Arab culture.

4.3.2. Social Conditions of Pre-Islamic Arab Society

In terms of sociology, pre-Islamic Arab society had diverse social characteristics. Some aspects of the social conditions in the pre-Islamic Arab community included the tribal system. Pre-Islamic Arab society was organized into tribes, the primary social and political units. Each tribe consisted of families with kinship ties and usually shared a specific geographic territory. These tribes had hierarchical structures based on the strength, bravery, and wealth of the tribe. Pre-Islamic Arab society also had a strong sense

of kinship. The concept of family was fundamental in the pre-Islamic Arab community. The family was considered the primary social unit, and family ties were vital. The continuity of lineage and family honor was highly valued. Concepts of honor and family pride often influence people's behavior and social relationships.

Slavery was a social phenomenon in pre-Islamic Arab society (Grasso, 2023c). Enslaved people often belonged to specific individuals or families and were used for various domestic, agricultural, or service-related tasks. The social status of enslaved people was lower than that of free individuals. During the pre-Islamic era, battles and wars among Arab tribes occurred daily. Disputes arose from territorial conflicts, hunting, and matters of honor and revenge. Struggles and conflicts had ritualistic elements related to preserving tribal or individual integrity.

In the pre-Islamic period, the role and position of women in Arab society varied depending on their ethnicity and social strata (Esposito, 1991). Some tribes have a robust patriarchal system where women are dependent and limited in terms of their freedoms and rights (Wadud, 1999). However, some other tribes provide essential roles to women and recognize their social status (Ahmed, 1992). However, the position of women is generally inferior to that of men in the pre-Islamic social structure (Barlas, 2002).

In pre-Islamic Arab societies, customary law, known as "Customary law," became the dominant legal system (Hooker, 1978). This customary law is based on rules and traditions that are accepted and respected by Arab tribes (Ratno, 2010). This system functions to maintain social order, resolve disputes, and maintain the honor and dignity of these tribes (Esposito, 1991). Customary law in pre-Islamic Arab societies covered various aspects of life, such as marriage, inheritance, and a deliberative-based justice system (Ratno, 2010). These rules are generally flexible and adapted to local socio-cultural conditions (Esposito, 1991). However, customary law can also cause discrimination against women, especially regarding rights and social status (Ahmed, 1992). With the entry of Islam, customary law began to erode and was replaced by sharia law based on the Quran and Sunnah (Hooker, 1978). However, some aspects of customary law still coexist with Islamic law, especially in certain areas (Ratno, 2010).

These social conditions in pre-Islamic Arab society reflected a social structure based on tribes, kinship, honor, and status differences. Although some aspects changed after the arrival of Islam, some elements of these social conditions still influence Arab society today.

4.3.3. Belief System of Pre-Islamic Arab Society

The belief system of pre-Islamic Arab societies was based on various spiritual beliefs and practices that included religious, mystical, and daily aspects of life (Esposito, 1991).

Pre-Islamic Arab societies are often called "jahiliyyah" societies, which indicate a pre-Islamic period and imply spiritual darkness or ignorance (Watt, 1961). In the context of pre-Islamic beliefs, "jahiliyyah" reflects a belief in various forms of religion associated with polytheism and idolatry (Armstrong, 2002). These practices include worshipping stars, stones, and other natural objects and believing in spirits and gods (Esposito, 1991). Pre-Islamic Arab societies also recognized the "hanif" concept, people who rejected idolatry and sought monotheistic truth (Armstrong, 2002). With the advent of Islam, the pre-Islamic belief system was gradually replaced by monotheism taught by the Prophet Muhammad (Watt, 1961). However, some pre-Islamic practices and beliefs still survive and coexist with Islamic teachings in some areas (Esposito, 1991).

Pre-Islamic Arab society worshipped multiple main gods. One of the most significant gods was Allah, believed to be the God of creation and the ruler of the universe (Esposito, 1991). Additionally, other gods and goddesses like Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat were considered to possess specific powers and influences (Watt, 1961). Pre-Islamic Arab society also engaged in idol worship. Idol worship involves worshipping statues or objects believed to represent gods or specific supernatural forces (Armstrong, 2002). These idols were believed to possess power and could bestow blessings or protection upon their worshippers (Esposito, 1991). Idol worship was a common practice in pre-Islamic Arab society (Watt, 1961). Alongside idol worship, the pre-Islamic Arab community also worshipped their ancestors. They believed that ancestors held spiritual power and influence that could assist or protect them (Nöldeke, 1905). Reverence rituals were performed to honor ancestors and seek their assistance (Wellhausen, 1897).

Pre-Islamic Arab society also involved mystical practices and divination in their daily lives. They relied on soothsayers, fortune tellers, and dream interpreters to obtain guidance or predict the future. Belief in mystical powers and supernatural influences was widespread among pre-Islamic Arab society. This belief system reflected the plurality of religions and spiritual beliefs in pre-Islamic Arab society. However, with the arrival and spread of Islam in the region, the monotheistic teachings of Islam opposed polytheistic practices and idol worship. Islam replaced many aspects of pre-Islamic beliefs, and the belief in the oneness of Allah became the core belief system and religious tradition of Arab society since then.

5. Conclusion

Arab society, before the advent of Islam, had a rich heritage of cultural practices, social systems, and religious beliefs that were passed down from one generation to the next. Pre-Islamic Arab society had a diverse and rich cultural heritage. The Arabic

language, poetry, art, tribal systems, and trade were some of the significant aspects of this cultural heritage. The pre-Islamic cultural legacy continued to influence the development of Arab-Islamic culture in later periods. The social system of pre-Islamic Arab society was based on tribal structures, strong kinship ties, intertribal warfare and battles, and varying roles and statuses of women. The customary legal system also played a crucial role in maintaining social order. Pre-Islamic Arab society held diverse religious beliefs. Some aspects of the pre-Islamic belief system were polytheism, idol worship, animistic beliefs, and ancestral worship. Mystical practices and divination were also widespread in daily life.

Through this research, we gain a deeper understanding of pre-Islamic Arab society and observe the cultural, social, and religious heritage they possessed before the influence of Islam entered the region. This research provides important insights into the development and transformation of Arab society throughout history. It establishes a foundation for our understanding of the cultural and social context in the region.

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