



Resources and Religion

TERMS & NAMES

OPEC

primary product

secondary product

petrochemical

hajj

Ramadan

MAIN IDEA

Oil resources are a powerful influence on the region's economies, and religion, especially Islam, is a powerful influence on its culture.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Peace in Southwest Asia and North Africa depends on prosperity and the ability of different religions to coexist.

DATELINE

KHUZISTAN PROVINCE, PERSIA (IRAN), 1908—A British company has just discovered oil here in Khuzistan. Both the British and the Persians expect it to bring their countries great wealth. The Shah of Iran (Persia) has given British businessman William Knox D'Arcy the rights to drill for oil here. D'Arcy plans to create the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and to begin exporting oil by 1912. The world's increasing dependence on oil for energy has led experts to predict that the value of oil will increase dramatically. The Middle East, they say, has the potential to become the greatest oil-producing area in the world.

Human-Environment Interaction • Workers lay an oil pipeline in the Khuzistan plain. ►



Human-Environment Interaction • British businessman William Knox D'Arcy was the principal founder of the oil industry in Iran. ▲

The Importance of Oil

Oil was soon discovered in other countries of Southwest Asia and North Africa. Great Britain, France, the United States, and other western countries made agreements with the oil-rich nations to build and run companies to develop the oil fields. Today, nearly half the world's oil is found here, mainly in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, and Iraq. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil-producing country, is also one of the largest oil exporters to the United States.



Human-Environment Interaction •
OPEC's oil embargo in 1973 led to long lines at gas stations. ◀

Gaining Control After World War II, many nations in the region chose to nationalize, or have their governments take over the running of, their oil industries. In 1960, four of these countries—Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait—joined with Venezuela, an oil-rich country in South America, to form the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or **OPEC**. OPEC would decide the price and amount of oil produced in each country each year. In a world dependent on oil as its major energy source, OPEC had a great deal of power. In 1973, OPEC placed an embargo on the export of oil to countries that supported Israel. As a result, the price of gasoline shot way up as its supply went down, leading to shortages.

Reading Social Studies

A. Analyzing Causes How did OPEC's oil embargo lead to a rise in the price of gasoline?

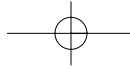
Developing New Products Since the early 1900s, oil has been the most important **primary product**, or raw material, in Southwest Asia and North Africa. The countries of the region export mostly primary products. (See the map below.) Many countries have also developed **secondary products**, or goods manufactured from primary products. In Iraq, for example, date palms are an important primary product. From them, industries in Iraq manufacture date syrup, paper from palm leaves, and other secondary products.

Products of Southwest Asia and North Africa, 2000

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting a Map

- Human-Environment Interaction •** Which five countries produce cotton?
- Human-Environment Interaction •** Which three countries produce the greatest amount of oil?





Oil Industries The oil-rich countries also use the oil to make secondary products. For over 30 years, Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries have been refining crude oil in modern refineries. They also make **petrochemicals** from crude oil and natural gas. Petrochemicals are used in the manufacture of cosmetics, plastics, synthetic materials, detergents, fertilizers, and many other products.

Religion in the Region

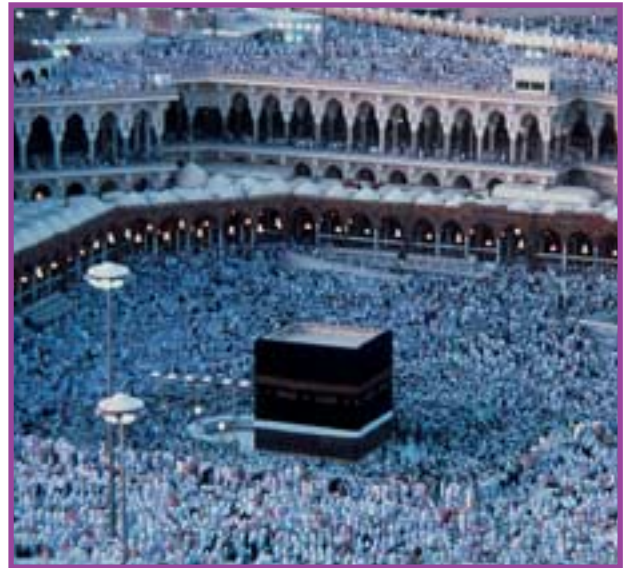
BACKGROUND

The Israeli city of Haifa is the world center of the Bahai religion, which split off from Islam. Bahais believe in the equality of men and women and a universal God.

Islam is the dominant religion in the region, but not the only one. Jews and Christians have lived there for thousands of years. Most Jews in the region moved to Israel once it was created, but small communities of Jews remain in Turkey, Egypt, and Iran. Many Christians left after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire. Today the Copts of Egypt and the Maronites of Lebanon are the region's two largest Christian communities.

The Influence of Islam on Culture

Every country in the region shows the influence of Islam. The Five Pillars of Islam (see page 235) are woven into the fabric of daily life. People stop to pray five times a day, no matter what they are doing—at home, in the streets, at school, at work. Radio and television stations air programs devoted to readings from the Qur'an many times a day. All Muslims try to go on a *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, once in a lifetime.



Ramadan During the ninth month of the Islamic year, called **Ramadan** (ram·uh·DAH·N), Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Only the very young or sick or those on a journey are allowed to eat or drink during this time. During Ramadan, believers eat a light breakfast before dawn. Then they do not eat or drink again until dusk. The joyous *Id al-Fitr* (id uhl·FIT·uhr), the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast, ends Ramadan and lasts for several days.

The Muslim Calendar For Muslims, the calendar begins the year Muhammad fled to Medina, A.D. 622 according to the Western calendar. Each Islamic year has 12 months of about 29 days each, which makes the Islamic year about 11 days shorter than the Western year. Each day starts at sunset.

Place • During a *hajj*, the holy city of Mecca is packed with pilgrims. ▲



Westernization vs. Traditional Culture

Many people in Southwest Asia and North Africa think western nations exert too much influence over their culture. Others are more open to westernization, adopting aspects of the way of life common in Europe and the United States. Fast-food restaurants, T-shirts, television, and rap music are examples of westernization. So are many technological advances in business, science, medicine, and agriculture. Some people in the region believe westernization will give them a higher standard of living and an easier, more exciting, more enjoyable way of life. For others, the loss of their traditional culture is too great a price to pay.

The Roles of Women

Women in the region have different roles in society. In countries like Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, many women are well educated and hold important positions in business, politics, and the military. In some countries, however, religious beliefs limit the roles women can play. For example, Saudi Arabian women have fewer rights than do Saudi men. Women are not allowed to attend gatherings with men, and they are forbidden to drive cars. A Saudi woman may have only one husband, but a Saudi man is allowed by Islamic law to have up to four wives. Very few Saudi women work outside the home. Those that do usually teach in all girl schools or treat patients at maternity clinics.



Persian Carpets Persians—now called Iranians—have been making carpets for more than 2,500 years. The first Persian carpets were woven for nomads who needed protection from the cold. Brightly colored intricate designs made the carpets valuable for their beauty. Craftspeople spent months and even years carefully weaving dyed sheep's wool into artistic patterns. Today Persian carpets decorate palaces, important buildings, and museums.

THINKING CRITICALLY



1. Drawing Conclusions

What do you think makes Persian carpets valuable?

2. Summarizing

What role have Persian carpets played in Iranian culture?





Culture • This woman is wearing a *chador*. ▲

Clothing and Culture

Clothing reveals much about the region's cultures. In Israel, for instance, some women and men dress in fashionable Western clothing. Orthodox Jewish women, however, wear more modest dress as their religious beliefs dictate. Orthodox men often wear black suits and hats and grow long ringlets of hair in front of their ears. In some Islamic countries, women wear *chadors*, floor-length cloaks that cover everything but the women's eyes. In Iran and

Saudi Arabia, such clothing is not a choice; it's the law. Men, too, dress and grow facial hair as Islamic law demands.

Vocabulary

nomads:
people with no fixed home who move about in search of food, water, and grazing land

A Disappearing Nomadic Culture

Once nomads lived in the desert places of the region. Most nomads herded sheep from place to place in search of grazing lands. Other nomads escorted camel caravans of traders across the desert. Today, only one percent of the population is nomadic. Now trucks, not camels, cross the desert on paved roads. Droughts have decreased grazing lands. Governments encourage nomads to settle down. They have also made it more difficult for nomads from other countries to cross their borders.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Terms & Names

1. Identify: (a) OPEC (b) primary product (c) secondary product (d) petrochemical
(e) *hajj* (f) Ramadan

Taking Notes

2. Use a chart like this one to list major products in Southwest Asia and North Africa.

Primary Products	Secondary Products

Main Ideas

3. (a) How are oil resources important to Southwest Asia and North Africa?
(b) How does Islam affect the culture of the region?
(c) What is the status of women in most Islamic countries?

Critical Thinking

4. Critical Thinking

What makes it difficult for nomadic peoples in Southwest Asia and North Africa to continue their traditional way of life?

Think About

- ♦ modern technology
- ♦ climatic conditions
- ♦ government actions

ACTIVITY -OPTION-

Make a **poster** showing crude oil and the products made from it. Label them as primary or secondary products.